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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"I MUST GO KITTY OR I SHALL MISS MY TRAIN; BUT I SHALL BE BACK AGAIN IN TWO DAYS WITH MY GOOD NEWS,"
SAID RUPERT, ALL UNCONSCIOUS OF THE DARK FACE FROWNING UPON THEM.

The Ocean of Life.

By the Author of "A Man of Sorrows,"
"Her Just Reward," &c., &c.

[A NOVELETTE.]

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT are you doing here?" The voice was harsh, the tone uncompromising, and the figure cowering in the darkest shadows of the inner porch shrank still further from the questioner. But he was not to be thwarted.

"What are you doing here?" he questioned again, and bending forward, touched her with an authoritative finger. "You had best answer me quickly and truthfully."

A white, flower-like face, with dark, desperate eyes was lifted to meet the clergyman's stern regard. It was the face of a girl not more than seventeen, but it already bore the impress of sorrow and want.

"I wanted to stay here to-night," said a low, sweet voice. "I am afraid of the dreadful streets."

"But the clerk is making fast all the doors. You would have been locked in here until the morning had I not discovered you."

"I should not have been afraid," she an-

sured, wearily. "This is God's house! surely I am safe here!"

The Reverend Kennedy listened frowningly. Then he said,—

"Where is your home?"

"I have no home,"

"But you have friends?"

"Not one in the world. I buried my father yesterday," and here the sweet voice faltered and broke, the dusky eyes grew heavy with tears she would not shed. "He was ill so long that all our savings went, and so this morning the landlady told me I must leave."

"What was your father before his illness?"

"A clerk in the City," the girl answered. And now she rose and faced her questioner,

A Bright and Interesting Story : "NURSE NANCY" : Complete Next Week.

and he saw she was very slight—just a mere slip of a girl, all unfit to battle with a cruel and wicked world. But he had been so often deceived by candidates for charity that his naturally suspicious nature had grown more and more distrustful with each passing year; and his voice was not a whit less harsh when he bade her tell him where she had last lived, and what guarantee she could give of her respectability. But the poor child was too miserable, too desolate, to resent his manner or his questions, and answered meekly enough. The clergyman stood silent and thoughtful a moment, then he said,—

"Of course, your story may be true, and if so you are to be pitied; but before I can give you any material assistance I must satisfy myself of your integrity. But our church commands us to extend charity to all; so, for to-night at least, I will take you to my own home; in the morning Mrs. Kennedy will know what to do with you. Come."

The clerk advanced jingling his keys, and glancing curiously at the slim, black-robed figure.

"I am going now, Sterne," said Mr. Kennedy. "Have you made all fast?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Oh, Sterne, I had forgotten I have a parochial meeting to attend tomorrow, so I must ask you to go to number five Charles-street, Torrington-road, and make inquiries there about this young person. What is your name?"

"Kitty Romayne."

"She states she is an orphan of respectable birth, reduced to this strait by misfortune. Ascertain if these statements are correct."

"Yes, sir," then he added quickly, as if fearful of giving offence, "my daughter Jane has gone to fresh service, sir, and this poor girl can have her bed, if you care to give her into the wife's charge."

"No, Sterne, no," ungraciously. "I prefer she should remain for the present under my own special espionage. Good-night. Come, girl."

She followed slowly and apathetically, hardly conscious of her protector's ungracious manner, his frowning suspicious regard; hardly wondering what would be the next event in her sad young life. And presently they came to a large, gloomy-looking house, to which they were admitted by a severely respectable man-servant, of whom Mr. Kennedy asked,—

"Where is your mistress?"

"In the library, sir."

Bidding Kitty follow him, he led the way to a large and gloomy-looking room where a lady sat writing.

"Eunice," he said, with no softening of harsh voice, "I have brought you a protégée."

Mrs. Kennedy looked up quickly, and the sweet, somewhat sad face grew very pitiful as she met the appealing glance of these dark brown eyes. But she did not venture to speak, until her husband added,—

"She is without friends, without home, but claims to be respectable. Give her a bed to-night. In the morning I shall know what to do with her."

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Kennedy, in a gentle voice, "so young, and so friendless. Tell me your name, my dear?"

"Eunice, how often am I to remonstrate with you on your ill-advised sentimentality? Give the girl into Martha's care. There is nothing you can do to-night."

"Martha is not very well, Dunstan. I will attend to her myself;" and afraid lest her husband should forbid even this act of kindness, she hurried Kitty away to a little spare chamber at the top of the house. There her first act was to force the poor

wife into an easy chair, unfasten the thin jacket she wore, and remove the cheap crêpe hat which hid the masses of dusky hair.

"My dear," she said, "have you eaten anything to-day?"

Kitty shook her head; she could not speak, for this unusual kindness choked her utterance; and she was faint, too, with long fasting and woe.

With a compassionate look Mrs. Kennedy hurried out, to return in a short while with some ham sandwiches and a cup of fragrant coffee (the strongest beverage allowed in that house).

"Eat and drink first," she said, "then, if you like, you may tell me about yourself." And whilst Kitty discussed the welcome food she pretended to busy herself with some memoranda she drew from her pocket. Refreshed and strengthened, the girl put aside her plate, and waited for her benefactress to speak.

"How old are you, Kitty?" was the first question.

"Just seventeen, madam; father died on my birthday."

"Poor child! Was he ill long? Will it do you good to tell me all your sorrowful story? If so, do not hesitate to confide in me. I am old enough to be your mother; and I do not ask out of vulgar curiosity."

"Oh, I know! I know! You are most good to me, and I would like you to feel I am really what I say I am. There isn't much to tell. It is a common story. Mine is a common lot, but that does not make it easier for me to bear. My mother and father married when they were very young—mother was a governess and father a clerk in the city, taking a good salary. They never had any other child but me, and so I was not obliged to learn any trade. I wish now I had; but they educated me well, and guarded me so carefully that I never knew a want or a trouble till mother died four years ago. I think her death broke my father's heart. He was never the same again; and brooding over his trouble undermined his strength; so that when, nine months ago, he took a severe chill, the doctors all said it would be fatal. Oh, madam! I watched him failing day by day, and tried to believe I was mistaken, but could not. He grew weaker and weaker—less and less able to help himself. Then his place in the office was filled up, and we lived wholly upon his savings. How quickly they went, although they had taken so long to board! And I saw nothing but starvation before us, when we had come to the end of them, for in all the world we had not a single relative or friend."

"Thank Heaven! he never lived to know want. Just a week ago to-day he died. Oh! my heart, he died, and I was all alone. There was just enough money left to bury him and pay the rent; and when I had settled those claims the landlady came to me and said, knowing I was unable to keep the rooms she had let them, and would be glad if I would vacate them at once. Heartbroken I came away, and after wandering about all day I stole into St. Sepulchre's Church, thinking I would sleep there to-night, and in the morning I would try for work. Mr. Cresser, the landlady, allowed me to leave my box behind, as I could not carry it with me. She said she really ought to claim my things, because of the trouble the funeral had been."

"She is a rapacious woman," Mrs. Kennedy said sharply, "but she is not entirely mistress of the situation. To-morrow, Kitty, we will see what we can do for you. Now go to bed, and try to rest. Good-night, Heaven bless you, child." And allowing Kitty no time for reply, she hurried away, lest Mr. Kennedy should comment on her

long absence. And Kitty, worn out by her sorrow, and the weary wanderings of the day, soon fell fast asleep.

Dunstan Kennedy, vicar of St. Sepulchre's, was not a popular man.

He worked indefatigably in the parish, giving his time and energy without stint; he organised a reading-club and a night-class, gave large sums to the poor, and yet he was not popular. Those who most esteemed him neither liked nor understood him, and wondered how so pretty and kindly a woman as Mrs. Kennedy could have married such an austere man.

He was strictly evangelical in principle, and the services at St. Sepulchre's were very dreary indeed, the vicar refusing to permit more singing than was absolutely necessary. The psalms were read in the form of a duet between parson and people. The hymns were dreary compositions, drearily droned; and the sermons were very long, and generally of a terrifying nature.

There was small wonder that the congregation dwindled down to a mere handful of worshippers, who attended principally through long habit or attachment to the church itself. And Dunstan Kennedy never strove to conciliate a single member of his flock; invocations, and ungracious, and ungainly in manner appearance, making duty his god, he held austere on his way.

In his own house he reigned supreme. It was he who regulated the arrangement of the rooms, who sternly forbade the introduction of the dainty ornaments and draperies in which his wife's heart delighted; he called them "vanities," and inveighed against them fiercely; and she was too meek to resist. He did many a good deed, but he was hardly ever thanked—his manner of doing a kindness precluded that. And it was to this man's house Kitty had come—warm-hearted, little Kitty Romayne, who, until her father's death, had never known a harsh word or look.

She was roused early in the morning by a neat, middle-aged maid, who said,—

"You'd better dress quickly as the prayer-bell will ring soon, and the master never excuses us from prayers; if you make haste I'll wait for you."

Kitty needed no second bidding. Dressing with hasty fingers, she soon declared herself ready, and Martha led the way to the breakfast-room, where the others were already assembled. Mrs. Kennedy looked up with a timid smile of welcome, but her husband did not lift his eyes from the heavy Bible except when he asked, "Where is Mr. Rupert?" and a servant volunteered the information, "He has not left his room yet, sir."

Without waiting Mr. Kennedy began the morning's devotions, and just in the middle of the second chapter the door opened quietly, and a handsome young fellow slipped into his place beside Mrs. Kennedy. She gave him a reproachful look, which he answered with a smile, and then sat back and listened, with closed eyes, to the harsh voices reading divine words of love and comfort. Then followed the prayers; and they being ended, Kitty prepared to leave the room with the servants, but the clergyman's voice recalled her.

"Kitty Romayne, until I have proved you what you claim to be, I request you to take your meals in the room set apart for you. You may go to it now."

The pale young face flushed, the lips quivered, and the dark eyes glanced a little indignantly at him, as she said, "Sir, you have been very good to me, but if you accuse me of being other than I seem, let me go away now."

"I neither accuse nor condemn," coldly, "and if you left here, where would you go?"

"I do not know," wearily, "but there is always the river."

"I will talk to you later on," sternly. "Your life is not your own. Go back to your room." And as she escaped through the open door she was conscious of the kindly regard of the young fellow she had heard called Mr. Rupert.

Upstairs she went, and flinging herself on her knees beside her bed, sobbed wildly.—

"Oh, father! father! come back to your little daughter; I cannot bear suspicion. I—I cannot bear life here," and she wept without restraint.

She did not see Mrs. Kennedy again that morning. The lady had been strictly forbidden to hold any intercourse with the poor little wifé until she had been proved free from soil or smirch; for Dunstan Kennedy quite believed in making the gulf between the sheep and the goats as wide as possible. So the lady sat in the breakfast-room sewing rough flannels that her soul abhorred, and listening to the pleasant voice of her husband's handsome young nephew.

"Who is uncle's new protégé? She is very pretty, and looks like a lady."

"Poor child! she is an orphan, and her story is a sad one, I hope Dunstan will do the best he can for her."

"He need not speak to her as though she were less good than she looks."

"My dear, he has had much to render him suspicious. You never credit him with his true worth and goodness. You do not understand him."

Rupert said nothing. He was too genuinely fond of his aunt to distress her by harsh criticisms on Mr. Kennedy; but he thought Kitty Romayne was not likely to receive much kindness or consideration from the austere clergyman.

In the afternoon Kitty was once more summoned to her benefactor's presence. No kindly smile lit up the heavy, frowning face as she entered, and there was no softer note in the stern voice as he said.

"I find your story is quite correct, and am pleased to know I have not been imposed upon. If you are willing to remain here, and lead a godly and industrious life, I have given Mrs. Kennedy permission to receive you into her service. Lately her sight has been failing; and as I understand you are capable of doing fine sewing, and conducting her correspondence for her, there is no reason why you should not prove a suitable person, if you are so inclined. Mrs. Kennedy herself will deal with you in the matter of wages. You may go now."

She escaped gladly from his most ungracious presence, and went up to her own room. Thankful as she was for this rescue from starvation and death, she yet thought with horror of a life spent in this gloomy house, with no one to love her, or speak comfortingly to her—she whose whole life until now had been sheltered from hardship or harshness.

CHAPTER II.

"MISS KITTY, don't you ever cease working?"

"I am very busy this morning. Mrs. Kennedy wants these garments finished today. You know the Dorcas meeting is tomorrow."

"Bother the Dorcas meeting! You might spare a fellow five minutes."

A hot flush mounted the girl's pale face, and she glanced nervously at the door, then said, in a very low voice,—

"Mr. Rupert, I wish you would go away."

"Why?" the young man asked, calmly, contemplating the sewer.

"Mr. Kennedy would be angry to find you here."

"I don't see why he should. He can't

expect me to pore all day over my books; or if he does he will be grievously disappointed. Though I hope to take a good degree, I am not altogether a bookworm; and you know, Miss Kitty, there is a time to work and a time to play."

"You are wilfully misunderstanding me," she said, indignantly. "You know as well as I that our relative positions do not warrant any intercourse between us. You are the son of a gentleman, I, the orphan of a poor clerk, and your aunt's attendant."

"You should not talk so, Kitty. You are as much a lady as Aunt Eunice, and a great favourite with her. It is only stupid pride that makes you hold me at arm's length, and it isn't worthy of you."

The pale young face flushed more hotly than before.

"I am not proud, neither am I forgetful of my position in this house, or the cruel remarks your conduct will subject me to. You forget what is due to me!"

The fair, handsome face, grew white and stern.

"I will give you no cause to say that again," he remarked, and went out of the room, leaving Kitty a prey to contending emotions.

She had been at the Vicarage a fortnight now, and was almost reconciled to her new position, for Mrs. Kennedy treated her with unvarying kindness, and talked with her as an equal.

With the Vicar it was different. For all his rigid Christianity he laid down hard-and-fast rules between class and class, and esteemed it a kindness to let none with whom he came in contact forget his or her position.

He made Kitty feel her dependent position in a score of ways, one of which was that he always addressed her by her Christian name, although, indeed, she occupied the post of amanuensis to his wife. But for the lady's remonstrances he would have made her consort with the servants, and take her meals with them: but in this one thing his wife ventured to oppose him firmly.

"I want my secretary to remain a lady," she said. "I cannot afford to have her nice perceptions blunted, or her manners coarsened by daily contact with lower minds."

So Kitty's meals were taken alone, and all those hours not filled by labour were spent by her in dreary solitude. It often happened that, when she sat with Mrs. Kennedy, Rupert would saunter in and spend a whole morning with them; and although Kitty was always very silent, she liked listening to the gay, young voice, and now and again to look at the bright fair face of the Vicar's nephew.

He was always kind to her, and now perhaps he had offended him beyond forgiveness, and with that thought her head drooped low.

It was all very well to tell herself she had acted with propriety, that she could not have done otherwise. Such reflections failed to comfort the poor desolate little heart, yearning so passionately for love.

"I have made him angry," she thought again and again, "and his anger is very hard to bear; but what else could I do? He and I have nothing in common. He is a gentleman, I a wifé, without friends and without home. Mr. Kennedy will be careful not to let me forget that."

He had rescued her from starvation and death, but she could not feel grateful to him. Her life was so dreary, so heavy, she often wished he had left her in the church porch, where she must have frozen to death on that dreadful night when she found herself all alone in the world, hopeless and penniless.

"I should soon have been at rest," she said, with a little low sob. "I should have never known another care or sorrow. Oh, why did I not die then? before I learned to—love Rupert to the increase of my woes?"

Yes, it had even come to that with poor little Kitty Romayne: and, perhaps, there was small wonder that it should be so. This handsome bright-faced young fellow, with his winning ways and tender smile, had been so uniformly kind and gentle with her; had never, by word or look, reminded her of the gulf that yawned between them.

His father, Admiral Kennedy, had been called to the sick bed of a friend; so that Rupert, coming from Oxford, found the old home deserted save by the servants, and had taken up his quarters with the Reverend and Mrs. Kennedy.

He was touched by Kitty's story, her pale, sorrowful young face and sad eyes, and would have done much to make her life a little brighter, a little happier, although he knew any interference on his part would be sternly forbidden by his uncle.

Still he thought of her a great deal more than was wise or well; and as he sat poring over his books her face would rise between them and him, and he would almost fancy he heard the low notes of her sweet young voice. He was more hurt than he cared to acknowledge by her words.

"You forget what is due to me." They seemed to imply that he had not always behaved towards her as a gentleman, and the hot blood flooded his face as he said,—

"By Heaven, she is the first to hint that I am a cad," and he left the house in no very pleasant frame of mind. But he was of too genial and happy a disposition long to remember any offence; and the next afternoon he strolled into Mrs. Kennedy's favourite room, where she and Kitty sat sewing.

"You are just in time, Rupert," said the former. "We were getting quite drowsy over this interminable stitching; but it is wanted for some poor person in whom your uncle as an interest. Suppose you sit down and read to us—always provided you have nothing better to do?"

"I shall be only too happy to stay, aunt. What shall I read?"

"Oh, let Kitty choose; she has such good taste," but Kitty objected.

And after turning over a quantity of books in a half-discontented, dismayed fashion, Rupert said boyishly,—

"Oh, look here! I can't read any of this awful twaddle. I'll run and get something you will like. I suppose you don't read Swinburne, aunt?"

"I, Oh no. Your uncle does not approve profane poetry."

Muttering something the reverse of complimentary to Mr. Kennedy, Rupert hurried away, to return presently with an aesthetically-bound volume, which he opened at once, and began to read that marvellous poem, "The Triumph of Time." He read well, and his voice was musical and mellow; and right away from the opening verse,—

"Before our lives divide for ever,
While time is with us and hands are free,
(Time Swift to fasten and swift to sever
Hand from hand as we stand by the sea).
I will say no word that a man might say,
Whose whole life's love goes down in a day,"

to the closing lines, neither listener spoke, they hardly, indeed, seemed to breath; and Kitty, all unconsciously allowing her work to fall upon her lap, sat with her large dark eyes fixed upon his face, drinking in every word of that most exquisite poem. She had never heard anything like this; and when it was ended, she gave a deep sigh, whether of pleasure or pain she could scarcely tell.

Rupert was well-pleased with the effect it had produced upon her and bot at all sorry that before his aunt's praise of it had ended she was summoned to interview a poor woman in the adjoining room. He was not the sort of fellow "to let the grass grow under his feet," so he drew a little nearer, and bending solicitously over the girl, said,—

"I want you to prove you are not angry with me."

"Angry, Mr. Rupert? I hardly understand you."

"Well, you know you gave me that impression yesterday. You said I forgot what was due to you, and more in the same strain, and I have been thinking over it ever since. Miss Kitty, I should like to know you don't believe so poorly of me as that; for upon my honour I see no difference between you and any other lady (only that you are prettier), and I want very much to be your friend in every way."

"You are very good," she faltered, "but surely you must see friendship between us is impossible."

"That is just what I can't see. Why should it be? Kitty, don't you trust me?"

"Yes," faintly, because the glamour of his strong, bright presence was upon her. "I know that you are an honest gentleman, but that does not alter my position towards you. I am a poor girl, and your aunt's servant."

"Why do you talk like that? You are her equal in refinement, her superior in beauty and mind."

"Do you forget," wildly, "how your uncle found me?"

"No; and I wish I had been in his place. But, there, I will say no more that may offend you, you incorrigibly obstinate young lady. Only tell me I am forgiven."

"If there ever was anything to forgive, I forgave you before you asked it."

"And you will prove this by letting me give you some small pleasure. Now don't say no. It is really most innocent, and not worth any fuss or thanks. I have some books I am sure you would like to read. May I bring some down for you? I will leave them here in the recess, and you can take them to your room when you have an opportunity."

"You are most good, and I shall be glad to avail myself of your offer."

That evening, before she went upstairs, she had occasion to go into the breakfast-room, and there she found three volumes waiting for her. Kingsley's "Hypatia," Helen Mather's "Cherry Ripe," and Rosetti's "Poems."

With a thankful heart she carried them to her room. How good he was to her! She, who had nothing to give him in exchange for all his kindness—nothing but all the love of her innocent young heart. Inside "Hypatia" she found a little note addressed to herself.

"DEAR MISS KITTY,—

"To please me read this first, and do not hurry to return the volumes, although I have more for you when these are finished. I hope you will 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them' to your own pleasure, as they are all favourites with me.

"R. K."

She kissed the words he had written, and locked the note away with her few small treasures—a lock of her mother's hair, a posy ring her father gave her long ago, and a few letters he had written her when he had been compelled by business to leave home for a short time.

The days slipped by with lightning speed to Rupert, bringing nearer and nearer the

time of his return to Oxford; and, for the first time since he entered college, he looked forward to it with dread.

How to go and leave Kitty—his Kitty—to the mercy of Dunstan Kennedy, to her un-congenial, weary life, was the question agitating him.

His father, Admiral Kennedy, was as opposite as light to darkness to his uncle; but Rupert well knew the bluff old sailor would never consent to an engagement between his only son and a poor little waif of no standing or birth.

What should he do? His father was dear to him, but not so dear as Kitty, and he could not give her up. "There is nothing for it but patience," he thought, "I must keep my own counsel for awhile, until I see the way clear to confess all to the governor. I wish I had chosen any profession but the medical. It will be such a precious time before I can earn enough to keep myself, let alone a wife."

Yet knowing this, he did not intend returning to Oxford without speaking to Kitty; and the day before his departure he found his opportunity.

Mr. Kennedy was attending a vestry meeting, his wife was driving with a friend, and Kitty sat alone in the breakfast room engaged in writing letters.

She looked shyly up as he entered, and blushed slightly.

"Are you very busy, Miss Kitty?" he asked, sauntering to the fireside, from which post he got a very good view of her pretty pale face.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Rupert? I can spare ten minutes."

"I want to talk to you," he answered, a little awkwardly. "Do you know when I am returning to Oxford?"

"Mrs. Keenedy said on Saturday, I believe," Kitty murmured, looking intently down at her desk. "You will be glad to go; this place is dull for you."

"I have not found it so," gravely: "and I am sorry that only three days of my vacation remains to me. You have made it very pleasant to me."

"I! Oh, Mr. Rupert?"

"Yes, you, Kitty. You are such a fresh, sweet piece of life in this place I can't tell you how I shall miss you. I wonder if you care at all about my going; or if you are too indifferent to me to feel either glad or sorry."

As he watched her, the slow tide of colour crept over throat and cheek to die as slowly away, leaving her paler than before.

"Are you sorry, Kitty?" he persisted, and trembling a little, despite her utmost efforts to keep quiet, she said, in a very low voice,—

"I am sorry; you have been always so kind to me. I—I shall miss you!"

"Thank you, I am glad to hear you say that; and you may believe that I shall see you again as soon as I may; but my next vac. I must spend with my father. I take my degree next June, and then shall come up here to walk one of the hospitals, so we shall often meet then. You will not forget me?"

"No;" and she thought that she would never forget while life lasted.

"Will you write to me?" he asked, coming a little nearer to her.

"Oh! no, no! I must not, I dare not!" she cried, tremulously.

"But why? You don't know how I should prize ever so little a line from you. I shall be very lonely at Oxford, and beset, too, by doubts that you have forgotten or will forget me. Now, if you would write me now and then you could not do that. I should sometimes dwell in your memory. Kitty, won't you give me the pleasure I ask?"

She had risen and stood now twisting her fingers together in greatest agitation. Her eyes were downcast, her lips tremulous; and he, seeing his advantage, went nearer yet, and with gentle force possessed himself of her small, white hands.

"Do not send me away comfortless."

"It is wrong. I am very much afraid it is wrong; but I will write sometimes, not often."

"How shall I thank you? You have made me very happy," and then he paused, looking ardently down upon her.

She was so sweet, so sad, so terribly alone in the world that his heart ached for her. She was so dear to him, and he so young and impetuous, that all in a moment he had her fast and close in his arms, and was kissing life and colour into her pale face.

"Kitty, I love you! I love you!" he cried, and she, lifting star-like eyes to his, answered.—

"And I you; but oh! what will be the end for me?"

He held her fast.

"You shall be my dear and honoured wife."

"Oh! that will never, never be! Remember your father. What would he say if he knew the truth?"

CHAPTER III.

"He pleased himself when he chose his wife, he would hardly refuse his son a like privilege!" But then his honest nature reassured itself, and he said, very gravely and tenderly,—

"My darling Kitty, I am afraid he will not be pleased at first; but he is so generous and warm-hearted that we shall have very little difficulty in winning him over to our way of thinking. So keep a brave spirit, dearest, and trust me in and through all. You do trust me?" earnestly.

"Indeed—indeed I do; only—only, Rupert, there is such a terrible difference between us, and I am afraid nothing will ever be right with me any more. Oh, my dear, for all your love, for all the honour you have paid me, I thank you with a full and grateful heart; but never, never will I drag you down to my poor level; give you the cup of poverty to drink, the bitter bread of dependence to eat. If it is for your good you should marry me (and, oh! I dare not think that), I hope that some day, when your love has stood the test of absence and opposition, we may come together. But if it is for evil, then night and day, on my knees, I will pray Heaven this union may never be. You are more than life itself to me. I will never hurt you," and then she burst into heavy sobs, which he vainly tried to check. "Let me be—just a moment," she pleaded. "I shall be stronger soon" and he chivalrously respected her entreaty.

In a little while she had grown calm enough to listen to him.

"Kitty, dear, you must not begin your engagement with doubts of my loyalty or fears of the future. We are both so young we can afford to wait a year or two if necessary, and I am not a fellow lightly to change; and should my father remain obdurate, that will not alter my fixed resolve; for should not a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife? Only, of course, we should have to wait longer before we could marry. And now one thing more. In June I take my degree; until then I should wish to keep our engagement secret, because I am sure any rupture between my father and myself must materially lessen my chances of passing well. Am I asking too much of you, sweetheart?"

"How can you ask too much—you, who

are giving me all? Let everything be as you wish, dear Rupert, and it will be well."

Her earnest love, her simple faith in him touched him beyond all words. He bent his bright young face upon the glory of her dark tresses, and in his heart he prayed, "Heaven make me worthy of her!"

His great love made him humble as a little child. His reverence for her would keep him pure and unsullied amongst all the temptations with which an university town is rife; and nothing would ever shake his great faith in her.

"As soon as term ends I shall run up to town on some purely personal business, and then, of course, I shall see you. Then I shall go down to Penarvon (our place) and make a clean breast of it all to the governor. Until then I am resolved to look on the bright side of affairs, and do you, my Kitty, try to do the same."

"I shall not see you for five months!" she whispered, brokenly.

"I am afraid not, but we shall both be so busy that the time will soon pass, and we shall have each other's letters for consolation. Haven't you a photo of yourself, Kitty?"

"No."

"Well, you must get one as quickly as possible, and send on to me. Mine (if you care to have it)—this slyly 'you shall have before—I go. But as you value our future happiness you will not let either Mr. or Mrs. Kennedy guess the truth. She would be our friend if she dared, but my uncle rules her with a rod of iron."

"I will be very careful; and now, Rupert, I think you had best leave me. He will be returning soon, and he is so suspicious."

"But I must see you alone again before I go. Promise me I shall."

"Do you think I should deny myself that pleasure unless compelled?" she asked, with the first gleam of mischief he had ever seen in her.

"You little darling! So it is a pleasure to have me with you? Say it again and again."

"No, Rupert, I must not foster your natural conceit." Then with a sudden change of manner, "Go now, dear love; I want to be alone. I want to think over this great and blessed change in my life, to realise how good Heaven is to me. Oh, Rupert! Rupert! my gladness is too great to last."

What answer he would have made to that was never known, for the hall door opened with a clang, and much against his will, Rupert was forced to take a hasty farewell of his little sweetheart. On the staircase he met Mr. Kennedy.

"Are you going out?" he asked.

"Not if you have any work for me, uncle. You look tired."

"The true servant does not think of fatigue whilst his master has need of him," coldly; "but I should be glad if you would help me with these parochial accounts. I am not so clever at figures as I could wish."

So together uncle and nephew entered the study, and until the dinner bell rang, busied themselves with the great pile of papers the clergyman had brought home with him.

The young lovers had no further chance of speech in all the three days that followed Rupert's declaration, and Kitty was beginning to think that no word of farewell would pass between them.

It was Saturday morning, and Rupert's belongings were already in the hall. The carriage containing his aunt and uncle waited him, when he burst into her presence.

"I haven't a moment to spare, Kitty, darling, but I couldn't go without a good-bye. Here is my portrait, and mind you

send me yours quickly. I will write you to-morrow. As you open the letter-bag there will be no danger of discovery. Little sweetheart, little wife, good-bye, good-bye!"

"Good-bye, and Heaven bless you and keep you always," and then followed one quick passionate embrace, and—he was gone. Kitty sank down upon a couch, and hiding her face in her hands gave herself up to bitter tears.

What should she do now that he was gone? All the light and happiness seemed gone, and her heart ached with its intolerable sense of desolation. How should she bear to live through five long months without the sound of his voice or the touch of his hand? The assurance of his deep and earnest love? Then suddenly she rose.

"I am a coward and ungrateful," she said aloud, "but I will be so no more. I have much to learn before I am a fitting helpmate for him. Heaven grant me strength and will to make myself worthy of him."

The days that followed were very heavy ones to Kitty; but she had much to do, and could not brood over her troubles as a less occupied girl might have done. Then she had Rupert's letters to comfort her; and but for the fear of the Admiral's anger when he learned all she would have been happy, or as happy as she could be separated from her lover.

She grew daily in favour with Mrs. Kennedy, but she never had been, and never would be, a favourite with her austere patron.

Perhaps she was too pretty and refined; perhaps there was something in the expression of her clear, soft eyes which seemed to reproach him whenever he gave utterance to some especially hard judgment, or expounded some cruel doctrine to his own satisfaction. However, that may be, Dunstan Kennedy did not like Kitty, and half regretted taking her into his house.

The weeks and months went by, and Kitty counted the days which must elapse before Rupert came to her again. In March, he travelled with the Admiral to Penarvon, where his vacation was spent; and from which place he wrote long and loving letters to his little sweetheart.

In April, he returned once more to Oxford, and applied himself heart and soul to his studies. At last came degree day, and the Admiral had gone to Oxford to be present at his son's triumph.

He was very proud of this fair-faced, honest young fellow; and when he found how good a degree he had obtained he was almost ready to promise him any gift he should ask.

Rupert felt inclined then to tell him all about Kitty; but a troop of friends swooped down upon him with congratulations, and insisted upon carrying him and the Admiral to a dainty luncheon, provided by one of the number. After this there were calls to make and visitors to receive, so that the day wore by without offering an opportunity to plead his own and Kitty's cause. At night the Admiral said,—

"Oh, Rupert, I expect you can be ready to start with me to-morrow for Peckerton? I promised Maston we would spend next week with him. He has a nice place and an extremely pretty daughter," and he looked so cunningly at Rupert that he guessed his father would not object to receive Miss Maston into his family.

This was complicating affairs with a vengeance; but he answered, quietly,—

"I shall be ready to follow you in two days, father; but I have a little business to see after first in town. So, with your permission, I will run up to my uncle's tomorrow."

"Can't your business wait, Ru? No?"

Well, then, I'll be off to Peckerton by an early train, and you can follow at your leisure. My boy, you will be quite the lion of the place. I am proud of you, Ru; more proud than I can tell. You have acquitted yourself so honourably!"

So the next day the Admiral went to Peckerton, and Rupert hurried to town. To his great delight, he heard on his arrival at the Vicarage that his aunt was lunching with a neighbouring vicar, and his uncle was also out. But Miss Romayne was in the breakfast-room; and so to the breakfast-room he went.

Kitty had heard and recognised his voice, his step, and now she stood, all flushed and trembling, one hand resting on the table, waiting for his entrance.

There was such love, such rapture in her eyes as they met his, that he held out his arms to her, saying,—

"Kitty, my little darling, Kitty!" and with a low cry she ran forward to be caught in his strong and tender embrace.

"And so you are glad to see me, little one?" he asked, after the first greetings had passed.

"Glad! Oh, Rupert, I have longed and yearned for this hour with all my heart. And now tell me of your success, for, of course, you are successful?"

"What faith you have in me, sweetheart; and just in this instance I deserve it. I have taken an excellent degree. These last six months I've worked like a Turk—all for you, my darling—and I have my reward. To-morrow I am to join my father at Peckerton, and then I shall tell him all and ask him how soon he will be ready to receive his little daughter."

"Must you leave me so soon? Oh, Rupert, I am afraid! But dear—never so dear as now, when this strange fear is upon me—should he be angry, you must submit to his will. You must try to forget me, who can never be worthy you. Loving you as I do with all my heart, with all my strength, I yet could better bear to live all my life without you than to know I had brought want and grief upon you."

"You shall not look on the dark side. My father has never yet denied me anything; it would be curious if he did so now. And Kitty, even should he be very angry, I cannot do as you advise. I will never give you up. For me 'there shines one woman, and none but she,' and you are that woman. Kitty darling, should the worst come, I will find some way in which to earn bread for you and myself. You have no extravagant tastes, and I should be content so long as I had but you."

"Oh," she said, with a burst of grateful tears, "you give up all for me; and if I served you all the days of a long life I never could repay your love and goodness. I am not fit to be your wife; and yet—and yet, no other woman could love you as I do. Rupert! Rupert! Heaven grant me grace to make you happy."

"I know you will do that, little woman. There, dry your tears, and let us spend one happy half-hour together. I suppose I must stay to see my uncle."

"I think you had best do so, or he might be angry when he found you had been here. He does not get more amiable with passing time, although perhaps I should not say so."

He laughed as he drew her close.

"He is a cantankerous old curmudgeon; but I shall always owe him a heavy debt of gratitude because he discovered my wife for me. I wonder how he will receive the news of our engagement?"

"Not very graciously. He does not regard me very kindly, but Mrs. Kennedy is an angel. My own mother could not be gentler to me than she is."

Then they sat talking, as lovers have talked through all ages, and took very little notice of the passing time until a sonorous school-bell near chimed four, and Rupert sprang up in amazement.

"I must go, Kitty, or I shall miss my train; but I shall be back again in two days with my good news. And then—then, sweetheart what happy years will lie spread before us. Kiss me, sweet, and wish me goodbye. Make what excuse you can for me to my worthy uncle."

Lip to lip, heart to heart, they stood, giving vow for vow, all unconscious of the dark face frowning upon them through the aperture. Slowly and noiselessly Dunstan Kennedy turned away, and meeting a servant said,—

"Do not tell Mr. Rupert I have been in," and so left the house again.

CHAPTER IV.

RUPERT went down to Peckerton where he was received with effusion. Everybody was ready to make much of the successful young student, and people were not likely to forget either that he was Admiral Kennedy's only son, and heir to a very fine unencumbered property. The Admiral himself looked almost absurdly proud of Rupert as he entered Mrs. Matson's drawing-room with him. Was there another young fellow present who could compare with him in physique or comeliness? Then, too, what a charm there was in his bright, frank ways and speech!

"The woman he marries will be the luckiest woman on earth!" was his unspoken thought.

As for Rupert he was a little graver than usual, knowing that on the morrow he would deal his father's pride a bitter blow; and the love between them was so deep and real that he hated the mere idea of paining him. But he had had enough of secrecy, and he owed it to Kitty, to acknowledge her before all his small world.

In the meantime the girl was full of anxiety concerning the way in which the Admiral would receive Rupert's confession, and too much absorbed in her own thoughts to notice the stern and condemning look in Mr. Kennedy's eyes. He said nothing to his wife of his discovery that night, but brooded over it, trying to see the best course of action; and in the morning he had made his decision.

"Eunice," he said, "Kitty Romayne must leave here."

"Leave here!" the lady exclaimed, surprised. "Why, Dunstan?"

Then he told his story, stigmatising Kitty as artful and designing, and Rupert not one bit better than the general run of young men. But for once the meek wife dared to question his wisdom.

"Kitty is not the sort of girl to indulge in idle or foolish flirtations, and if Rupert has addressed her in the language of love, I am quite sure his intentions are honourable. And Kitty is pretty and refined enough to be any man's wife."

"Class distinctions must be observed," Mr. Kennedy answered coldly. "I shall, however, say nothing to the girl until I have seen Arnold. If he chooses to approve such a mésalliance of course I have nothing more to say on the subject. I am now going to telegraph him to come here at once; and you understand, Eunice, I will not permit you to hold any intercourse with Kitty Romayne, until I have talked matters over with my brother."

He knew his iron will and inflexible determination too well to offer any further opposition; and afraid lest Kitty should guess, from a momentary glimpse of her face, how much disturbed she was, spent the greater part of that day abroad.

The Admiral was talking gaily to a group of ladies when his brother's telegram was handed to him. It read:—

"Come at once; important business. Meet you at Baker-street. Say nothing to Rupert."

"What the deuce is up?" the Admiral said to himself. Then aloud, "My dear Mrs. Maston, I am afraid I must run away from you, important business calls me to town; but if possible I will get back tomorrow."

"I hope it is nothing unpleasant," his hostess said cordially. "And oh! how we shall miss you. You have been the life and soul of our little party, and I am quite afraid the ladies will not forgive your desertion."

"Not desertion, madam," gallantly. "I shall return with all possible speed, and mine will be the loss. If you will excuse me I will make my few preparations and be off. I find I have no time to spare."

As he went up to his room he met Rupert.

"Oh, I'm glad to find you alone father. I have something I want to tell you."

"Sorry I can't stay to hear it now, my boy, but I am called away on business. Shall be back to-morrow; keep your news till then. I have not a moment to spare." And so Rupert's confession was not made.

The day was closing in when the old gentleman reached Baker-street, where his brother, grim and tall, was waiting him. In the waning light he looked very saturnine and forbidding.

"Well, Dunstan," said the sailor, "what's the row? Why the deuce have you hurried me up to town in such a mysterious fashion? It's nothing pleasant, I'll be bound."

"You are right," grimly; "but get in. I'll tell you all as we drive home."

And he did, not sparing poor Kitty in the least. He laid bare all her little story to the Admiral, and quite unconsciously boasted of his own charity: lamented that Rupert had got into mischief whilst in his house, and under his care, as it were, and ended by saying,—

"Now, Arnold, I hardly think you would permit an alliance between these two; and you would not have your son play the villain!"

"By Heaven! I'd disown him if he did. But," with a fierce oath, "a Kennedy deserves something better than a nameless wench for his wife. Look here, Dunstan, I'll see the girl, and if she's sensible I'll compromise the matter with her; but if Rupert has made er any promise, and she keeps him to it, I'll wash my hands of him. But I never will receive such a designing little hussey as my daughter."

"That is not to be thought of; but I am sorry to say Eunice is very much attached to this young person, and I am afraid we shall have some trouble with her. But I am master in my own house, and so I have resolved to send Kitty Romayne packing to-morrow. I think I know of a suitable situation for her, where she can be carefully guarded. Greatly as she deserves punishment I cannot send her homeless into the world."

"Great Scott, no!" and the Admiral made use of an expression more forcible than polite.

His brother shuddered.

"You have not overcome your unhappy habit, Arnold?" he said.

"No, nor never shall; but we need not quarrel about that. You use your own set of phrases, and leave me free to use mine. Here we are! Whew! what a gloomy old place it is! It would kill me if I attempted to live in it."

Without a word of reply Mr. Kennedy led the way into the hall, and from thence into his study, where the light was already failing fast.

"Will you see Kitty Romayne now, Arnold, or after we have dined?"

"Now. If I have any unpleasant business on hand I never rest or eat until it is transacted; and warring with a woman makes me feel like a coward. Send for the girl at once! Oh! for Heaven's sake, don't light the gas. I hate to see a woman's confusion or distress, and there's quite light enough for us to talk by."

"As you please," and, ringing a bell, he bade a servant send Kitty to him.

The Admiral, tall and broad-shouldered, stood before one of the windows fidgetting with a crimson blind tassel, and wishing the affair well over.

Mr. Kennedy had dropped into his chair, and waited motionless and impassive for the girl's coming.

A light step in the hall, a hand upon the door; and then, as the sailor turned, he saw in the dim light a slender young figure, which paused timidly, and heard a sweet, low voice say,

"You sent for me, Mr. Kennedy!" and through its sweetness there ran a tremor as of fear.

"Yes. Come in and shut the door!" And when she had obeyed, he turned to his brother with a wave of the hand. "This is Admiral Kennedy, Mr. Rupert's father, and he wishes to know what understanding exists between his son and you?"

She caught her breath sharply, and for a moment was silent. Then she asked, scarcely above a whisper,—

"Has not Mr. Rupert told him?"

"He has had no chance," the sailor answered, bluffly. "It was my brother who sent for me, and told me a most astounding piece of news. Look here, young woman, I don't mean to be hard upon you; but if you think for a moment I shall admit you into my family you are mistaken. So, if there is any foolish flirtation between you and my boy it must end at once and for ever. Be honest with me, and tell me what understanding there is between you?"

She tried to speak, but failed twice; and the Admiral, whose heart was soft enough, however rough his manner, said, in an almost kindly tone,—

"Now, my girl, don't be afraid to speak the truth. You have only been a little foolish, and Ru is a handsome young scamp; but you'll be wise to confess all now, and to save further trouble."

She spoke then, with a sweet, unconscious dignity,—

"Five months ago Mr. Kennedy asked me to be his wife, and I promised—conditionally."

"What! And you have been deceiving my brother and myself so long?"

"Sir, Rupert feared your opposition, and wished to wait until he had taken his degree before broaching the subject. He did not intend deceit."

"Probably not," savagely. "And may I ask what were your conditions?"

"That he would not hold me to my promise if in any way it endangered his future welfare."

"You are an astute young lady, and it seems have no intention of sharing poverty with my son. I am afraid your love is of a very material type."

The hot blood flooded the poor girl's face. She was glad the gathering darkness hid her emotion from her persecutors. Her voice was steadier than before, when she answered his taunt,—

"I did not suppose, sir, you would judge me kindly or correctly. I could not hope for that. But, much as you wrong me, at

least believe me when I say that I esteem my lover's happiness before my own; and rather than injure him I will submit to any conditions you may exact or impose."

"Are you willing to relinquish all claim to him?"

"Not willing, sir, but ready if the need arises," she answered, bravely.

"It has already arisen. I admit my son has not behaved well to you, but you must have felt from the beginning that such an alliance as he proposed would be most distasteful to his family. I blame him greatly, but—"

"But the greater blame rests on this young person," broke in Mr. Kennedy. "She has wilfully and persistently deceived those who rescued her from want or shame; she has added ingratitude to her other sins."

"Softly, softly, brother! It isn't fair to lay so much upon the woman's shoulders. That's just what Adam did, and men have done over and over again since his day, and it's a cowardly trick. Miss Romayne, I blame you less than I do my son. You had everything to gain by a marriage with him; but he has no excuse for forgetting what is due to his family and his position. I don't want to be hard with you; but it is wiser that I should place matters before you very plainly, to prevent all future misunderstandings. If Rupert persists in this folly, from the day he marries you he is no longer my son. I wash my hands of him. You know what that means for him—poverty in lieu of riches, for I swear not a penny of mine shall ever come to him. You cannot love him if you are willing to pull him down to your own level, to see him drag out his life in poverty and despair. Girl, in a little while he would curse the day he met you."

She clasped her hands over her tortured heart, and said under her breath,—

"You need say no more. I am a poor girl, all alone and friendless, and perhaps I am rightly punished for my presumption; but I—even I—am not without my pride. You need have no further fear of me. I will not force myself upon one who so misjudges me as you have done; and, sir, although you mock at my love, and choose to think me mercenary, I can afford to smile, knowing my own integrity.

"If you loved your son as I have done, as I always shall, you would understand me better. You would place his happiness first. I promise here and now, solemnly as though I were dying, that without your consent I will neither see nor communicate with him any more, unless it is to write him a line of farewell. I will not spoil his life or embitter his days. He is quite, quite free, and may Heaven make him as happy as you have made me wretched."

Her face shone ghastly white through the gathering dusk; her great dark eyes glowed like stars, and the Admiral's honest heart was smitten with admiration and pity for her. Let her be what she might—adventurous, *intrigante*, she had great courage, and he admired nothing so much.

"I believe you will keep your promise," he said, almost gently, "and I am much obliged to you for giving me so little trouble. If you will allow me, I shall be happy to recompense you in a measure for your disappointment," and he took out his pocket-book.

But he was hardly prepared for the indignation with which she realised his intention.

"How dare you so insult me?" she cried. "Oh! this is worse than all! Poor and obscure as my father was, he would have scorned to have offered money as an equivalent for blighted hopes and a broken heart. I am glad your son will never know what should be your shame!"

"I—I—upon my soul, Dunstan, speak for me."

"There is no need. This young person is bent on making a scene. You do not understand her class as I do. To-morrow she will doubtless be quite ready to accept your generous gift."

"Oh, cruel! cruel! Mr. Kennedy, is this the charity you preach?"

"That will do, Romayne; there is no need for further speech. I have done my best for you, and you have rewarded me with basest ingratitude and deceit. I can no longer allow my wife to associate with you. But I will not cast you utterly adrift. To-morrow I will take you to a new home, where you will be carefully guarded."

"No, sir. To-morrow I shall know how to help myself. I am not ungrateful, but I am human, and I have already borne too much, and with that she went from the room, leaving the Admiral in a most uncomfortable state of mind.

CHAPTER V.

SHE went slowly up to her own room, her heart like lead within her bosom; but she could not cry. She was full of passionate indignation against Mr. Kennedy and the Admiral.

How dare he, Rupert's father, offer her a bribe to forego her love? What manner of woman did he believe her to be?

"Oh, father! oh, my father!" she moaned, "come back to me! The world is so hard, and I—I—my courage fails me. What shall I do? Oh, my heart, what shall I do?"

But she was not given to much weeping, this little wifl, who was so sorely tossed and buffeted about on the cruel ocean of life; and when she had won back herself control she began to pack her few belongings into her modest trunk.

She hardly remembered her patron's promise to find her another home; and she was fully resolved to free herself from his control.

His mere presence in the house oppressed her with a sense of sickness and fear. She must get away. She had promised to leave her lover free; but should he come to her pleading with her to forego her hard decision, she was horribly afraid lest she should yield, and so spoil all his life, mar all his prospects.

Night had come, and she sat before her open window, trying to think calmly, to map out the future that lay stretched before her in such awful desolation.

What should she do with all the years of her life? She was so young, and sorrow had come so early to her. At her age most girls were glad; but she—oh! it was too hard, too hard.

She was scarcely eighteen, and she might live to be eighty. Was every year of her life to be so heavy with grief as this? Then words she had read but the day before came to her memory to torture her afresh.

"So short is our life, but with space for all things to forsake us."

A bitter delusion from which nought can awake us.

Till death's dogging footsteps at morn or at eve shall o'ertake us."

With a pitiful gesture she spread out her arms before her, and laying her face upon them, whispered,—

"Dear Heaven, let me die here, and now. Surely, death is mild compared with this agony of pain."

"Kitty! are you there?" whispered a voice from the doorway. "May I come in? Oh, Kitty, how my heart aches for you."

She lifted her head.

"Mrs. Kennedy, do you know everything?"

"Yes," closing the door, cautiously, and advancing towards. "Mr. Kennedy has told me. Oh, you poor child, what good did you think could come of your love? But, Kitty, dear, there is no girl I would like so well for Rupert's wife as you. It is cruel, most cruel, that class prejudice should come between you and Ru. I wish you were my own child!"

"Oh, thank you, thank you for those words, they do me good. And you are not very angry with me that I hugged my secret so close?"

"Angry! No, child! I have only room in my heart for pity, you poor, helpless, friendless little soul. But take courage, Kitty, Rupert will never give you up. He is as true as steel."

"I know, I know. But oh! dear friend, do you for a moment believe that I could endanger all his future happiness, make his love for me a curse to him? No, no, no! When I leave here I shall strive only to hide myself away from him—to be lost to him as utterly as though I were dead. If one must suffer, let it be me. But oh! dear Mrs. Kennedy, if you should see him, tell him that I loved, and love him with all my soul and strength; that I pray he may forget me and be happy; that I was never worthy to be his wife; and—and in time he will learn this, and thank me for acting as I did."

"Kitty, you are an angel!"

"Oh, no, no! only a loving woman. I think that if by the sacrifice of my life I could serve him I should not hesitate to die. Now, dear Mrs. Kennedy, tell me what Mr. Kennedy proposes doing with me?"

The lady hesitated. Her heart was a little bitter against her husband and his brother.

"Kitty, it is a shame," she said, at last, "but they are so angry with you; and Mr. Kennedy has determined to take you to a servants' home. The matron is a very severe disciplinarian—a hard woman, without any affection. She wants an assistant, and Mr. Kennedy thinks you might suit, but he intends telling her all your story, and you would be under constant surveillance."

The hot blood flooded the girl's pale face, and she reared her head high; but by a great effort she refrained from speech, and Mrs. Kennedy went on,—

"I will come and see you sometimes if I may, and I will do my best to interest my friends in you; and in the meantime, my poor child, let me prove my affections in a material way. Mr. Kennedy will give your salary into the matron's hands, to be spent as she sees fit; but I cannot let you go from me penniless and helpless. Kitty dear, it is not much I can give you, only three pounds, but it will help you a little. Take it, and let me go before my absence is discovered."

Just a moment the girl hesitated, and the lady pressed it the more upon her.

"If not as a gift, accept it as a loan," she said, and Kitty answered with a sob.—

"As a loan then, and heaven bless you for all your goodness," and kissed the kindly hand with passionate gratitude. "I will repay you as soon as I can; and I would like to think you will plead with Rupert for his father—after all, it is natural he should be angry. And tell him not to try to find me, or he will drive me on to some desperate step."

"I will tell him all you say. And now, Kitty dear, I must go or my absence will be noticed. Perhaps I shall not see you any more, before you leave us; so kiss me now, child, and let us say good-bye."

Their lips met, and the elder woman's hands strayed lovingly over the other's dark, soft tresses. Then she gently set her aside, turned slowly and sorrowfully away, and went out, closing the door noiselessly behind her.

Kitty went back to her seat by the window.

"Thank Heaven!" she whispered. "I have help now; and I will no longer be the puppet of his will. If I cannot get work I can die. But I will do my best, for her sake, who has been as a mother to me."

Without disturbing she lay down upon her bed, and, despite her sorrow, soon fell fast asleep, and did not wake until the breakfast bell was ringing. Then, starting up hurriedly, she smoothed her hair, washed her face and hands, and, straightening the crumpled folds of her dress, waited for the next act of the drama.

Martha brought up her breakfast of weak tea and thick bread-and-butter; and as she set it down with a clatter, remarked,—

"Master says you're to have your things packed by twelve. He and the misses are going to a temperance lecture, and won't be back till noon; so you've got plenty of time, Miss Kitty."

"Very well, Martha; I shall be ready. You can go."

She tried to eat, but could not; her brain was in a whirl, and she was sick with excitement. Her one thought was to get away, to be free of Dunstan Kennedy's harsh supervision; and as the morning wore by she began to pack a few necessary articles in a small Gladstone. Then she wrote a short letter to Mrs. Kennedy, and having sealed and directed it, she watched her opportunity to escape. Stealing out of her room to reconnoitre, she saw the hall was empty, and the door slightly ajar. In an instant she ran downstairs, and in less time than it takes to tell found herself standing in the sunny street.

There was no time to lose.

At any moment the clergyman might return, and she was woefully afraid of his influence over her. What should she do? Then, like an inspiration, came the thought of a woman she had known for many years; a decent body who had taken a small house at Shepherd's Bush, which she let out in apartments. She would go to her; and surely, before her small capital was exhausted, she would find something to do.

So to Shepherd's Bush she went; and there was great consternation at the Vicarage when her flight was discovered. The old sailor regretted his harshness, and was ready to offer an almost fabulous reward for any authentic information concerning the lost girl. After all, she was little more than a child, and her love for Rupert might have been genuine. Dunstan Kennedy smiled grimly.—

"Brother, you don't know these people as I do. They are as full of wiles as a fox. In a short while Kitty Romayne will reappear with some plausible story, and soliciting further help."

"For shame, Dunstan!"

The voice was Mrs. Kennedy's, and she stood flushed and tearful in the open doorway.

"Is this the charity you preach, the charity which 'thinketh no evil?' Kitty Romayne is as good and modest a girl as any under the sun, and no man need be ashamed to make her his wife. I hope you are both satisfied with your work. It is manly to drive a poor orphan from her only shelter. Brother, have you thought what Rupert will say when he learns the truth?"

"Eunice!" her husband said, sternly, "be quiet!" but for once she was without fear.

She had broken through the long habit of half servile submission, and her woman's heart had grown suddenly brave.

"I must speak; I have been a coward to keep silent so long. For aught we know to the contrary, that poor girl has found a rest where so many have found it before her; and, if so, how will you feel with the thought of her death always upon your conscience? See, here is her last message! Take it and read it, Arnold. I—I cannot."

With his ruddy face grown pale, the Admiral took the short note Kitty had left for Mrs. Kennedy, and read it through in utter silence; but Eunice knew what he suffered by his expression.

"MY DEAR AND HONOURED FRIEND,—

"In going away from you thus, I feel I am acting for the best. I see now I should never have listened to Mr. Rupert Kennedy, although, indeed, I fear were the temptation again to assail me I should again succumb to it. Do not seek to find me. I will not be found, and I pray you help him to forget one whose only claim upon him was her great love to him. I know my flight will prejudice some against me; but indeed—I cannot live the life Mr. Kennedy has planned for me. It would madden me. And why should I, who am no criminal, be subjected to such degradation as Mr. Kennedy proposes for me? I will try to earn my own livelihood honestly, and if I fail—well, there is always the river. One thing more, dear friend. Do not let Rupert guess the share his father has had in this most unhappy business. I loved my own dear parent too well to wish any estrangement between them; and I am quite sure Admiral Kennedy acted as he believed for the best. Good-bye; love me and pray for me still!"

The sailor cleared his throat before he ventured to speak; then he said somewhat unsteadily,—

"I wish I had not been quite so harsh. After all, the girl seems to have some right feeling about her."

"You are easily deceived, Arnold. This was written with a view to effect," said the clergyman. "Well, I wash my hands of her entirely. But what explanation shall you give Rupert?"

"If he comes to me I shall tell him the truth," Mrs. Kennedy broke in. "He ought to know it. Poor Kitty! poor child! If ever you pray, Arnold, don't forget to entreat Heaven her death may not lie at your door," and with that Eunice Kennedy swept from the room.

"I wish," said her brother-in-law, as he wiped his heated face, "yes, upon my soul, I wish I had not meddled in this matter. Things would have righted themselves without my interference. In time the young people would have grown tired of each other."

"Kitty Romayne had every inducement to tire of Rupert," sneered the other.

"Oh, hang it, Dunstan, give the girl credit for some real feeling; and my boy is handsome and good enough to win any girl's heart. What the plague shall I say to him to-morrow, for of course he must be told? And upon my honour I'd rather face a crocodile than Rupert under such circumstances."

"You reverse the order of things and stand in awe of your son. Why, in a year or two he will thank you for your present action."

"I hope so, I'm sure; but I very much doubt it. He's not fickle."

Here the luncheon bell rang, and Mr. Kennedy led the way to the room where it was served. To his surprise Eunice was not there.

"Where is your mistress?" he asked of the servant in waiting.

"In her own room, sir. She said she was not well enough to come down, and hoped you would excuse her."

The meal passed in a most uncomfortable silence. Admiral Kennedy's conscience was not easy with regard to Kitty, and every time he thought of the bribe he had offered his face grew hot with shame and self scorn.

"I behaved like a brute," he thought. "What would the boy say if he knew all?"

That night he left for Peckerton without seeing Eunice again, and Dunstan Kennedy felt relieved by his departure.

CHAPTER VI.

"AUNT, where is Kitty?"

The lady dropped her work with a little cry.

"Rupert! Oh, my poor boy!" and both hands went out to meet his. "You know all?"

"Yes, all the shameful, scandalous story, and I left Peckerton at once. Can't you tell me anything of my poor girl?"

Her eyes filled with tears as she looked into the handsome, haggard young face, which had been so bonny so short awhile ago, and her voice was broken as she said,—

"I know no more than you have heard. Since she left us not a line or a message has reached me from her, and sometimes, Heaven help me, I think she is dead."

"No, no!" he cried, vehemently, "not that, aunt, I dare not face such a thought! I should go mad if I believed it. Tell me all you can about her flight; perhaps we may yet be able to trace her."

"I can tell you nothing you do not already know. Rupert, on what terms are you with your father?"

"The very worst," moodily. "He threatens if I ever marry Kitty to disinherit me, and I have sworn to marry no one else. I am not going back to Peckerton; I mean to spend all my energies in finding her, and in October I begin to walk St. George's. I wish with all my heart I had chosen some less expensive profession, so that I might the sooner have a home to offer Kitty, if I find her. Had she any friends with whom she could take refuge for a time?"

"None so far as I am aware. Oh, Ru you poor boy, how sorry I am for you! and indeed I am grieved too, for your father. It is hard there should be any cloud between you; he loves you so."

"A man shall leave father and mother and cleave to his wife," the young man said, sternly, "and I am bound to Kitty by every tie of honour and of love. Until my father recognises this we are best apart."

Eunice was half afraid of the tempest she had helped to raise.

"Rupert, he has only you; and he is getting old. Don't be hard."

The young stern face never softened, the deep blue eyes never lost their resentful look.

"If I find Kitty safe and well, I will think then of reconciliation—not before."

"Think what you owe your father—how all his hopes are centred in you?" she pleaded, laying her hand on his.

"I am not likely to forget; but he has gone too far. Now tell me, have you any idea where she has gone—what she intends doing?"

"I have none; but perhaps later I shall have some happy inspiration. In the meanwhile, Rupert, you must have some refreshment; and, of course, you will occupy your old room."

"No, thank you. I have taken apartments close by, and shall endeavour to see you daily. But, under the circumstances, I

cannot remain here," and from that he would not go.

It was with wet eyes Eunice Kennedy saw him go.

"If I had such a gallant son," she said, "I could not so wound him. It breaks my heart to see his haggard young face and sunken eyes. Heaven send a happy ending to his love."

Even whilst she watched him go, Kitty sat poring over the long list of advertisements contained in the *Daily Telegraph*; but at present she had found nothing to suit her, and her courage was beginning to fail her. Day by day her small store of money was wasting, and when it was gone what should she do? Suddenly the light flashed into her eyes, and a faint flush rose to her cheeks.

"Surely I am competent to fill this situation?" she said, under her breath, and then read aloud,—

"Wanted.—For a superior lodging house, a young lady to help in management and keep accounts; must be active, and an early riser. Salary, £15, and home comforts.—Apply to Mrs. Shippey, 5, Albuda-terrace, Corneystone."

She wasted very little time in replying, giving as her referee the good woman with whom she lodged, and then she waited anxiously for Mrs. Shippey's reply.

"I should be glad to go," she thought, as she tossed restlessly to and fro that night. "Corneystone is such a long way from London, and such an isolated place, that no one will ever think to look for me there."

The next two days she was in a fever of anxiety, and at night a letter came for her addressed in a very uneducated hand. It ran thus :

"DEAR MISS,—

"In reply to yours, I would like to say that I want a young lady who can do up accounts, and see after the comfort of the lodgers. You seem as if you might suit, and if you can give me a good character I shall be glad to see you here next Monday. I can promise you a good home and a mother's care.—Yours faithfully,

"REBECCA SHIPPEY."

Poor Kitty's heart sank a little as she read this unique letter, but she was not in a position to be particular, so she went to her landlady,—

"Mrs. Todd, will you give me a character for respectability?" she asked with a faint smile.

"To be sure, miss! Have you got something to do at last? Dear, dear, I am glad. There, pass me my writing case, and let me say all I can for you. Let me see. Young, ladylike, pretty and well educated; of most respectable parentage. Will that do?"

"I am afraid you have praised me too highly," said Kitty, with a little weary smile, "but, oh! I hope I shall be the successful candidate, for my money is wasting so fast. Mrs. Todd, I am rather doubtful about a lady who misspells so dreadfully. I picture her as a typical boarding-house keeper, and fancy life will not be too pleasant with her."

"Oh, nonsense!" said the other. "My own mother could neither read nor write, and yet she was a lady! I never knew her say an unkind word or do a mean trick, and that's more than I could say for a good many real born ladies I've met. And, Miss Kitty, if you aren't comfortable, remember you can always come back here."

The days slipped by, and on Saturday a note from Mrs. Shippey reached the young orphan. It was short, and to the point.

"Miss Romayne may come on Monday, and Mrs. Shippey will be glad if she will

take the first train from Uxbridge Station; it gets to Corneystone at eleven forty-five."

So on Monday Kitty bade Mrs. Todd good-bye, and started on her long journey. It was through a picturesque country, and she found many objects of interest to occupy her attention. But for the thought of Rupert she would have been almost happy.

Corneystone was a small watering-place on the south coast, and a favourite town with invalids in the winter months, on account of its mildness. The scenery was good, the beach pleasant, and it boasted a grand stretch of sea. As Kitty was whirled up to the little platform her eyes brightened, and a faint flush rose to her cheeks.

"If only Mrs. Shippey is a decent body I may rest here. The place is very lovely!" and as she thought thus the train drew up.

On the platform stood a comely woman of forty or more, carefully and even elegantly dressed, and her dark eyes wandered restlessly from window to window until they rested on Kitty's dainty face. Then she went forward, and as the girl alighted, said,—

"Ain't you Miss Romayne?"

Kitty answered in the affirmative, and the other offered her hand cordially.

"I knew I couldn't be mistaken; I never am, my dear. I'd a sort of notion what you'd be like, and I ain't disappointed. Here's the cab; jump in. It ain't far to Albuda-terrace, but I'm no great shakes at walking."

Her manner was totally devoid of refinement, but very kind; and when once they were seated in the cab she turned and gave her pale companion a hearty kiss.

"That's your welcome, my dear, and I hope you'll be happy here. I like your face, and I think we'll get on fine together. I always have plenty of lodgers, and so I'd need; for I ain't got a penny beyond what I earn. You see, my dear, I married above me; and when my husband died his folks didn't take any more notice of me. Then, I'm that ignorant I can't talk to the ladies as I should, and I make awful mistakes in their bills which is bad for both parties. So at last I thought I'd advertise for a young lady to help me. I don't want you to do menial work, my dear. I've got two good servants as ever was. Well, here we are; and I say I'm glad, for there's no place like home."

Kitty gave one quick, half-scared look at the house; then her tired face brightened. It was a handsome, red-brick building, picked out with white stone, and before the drawing-room windows rose a substantial balcony, rich with blossoms and evergreens. The curtains were spotlessly white, and every pane of glass winked and blinked in the broad, noonday glare.

"It ain't a bad place, is it?" said Mrs. Shippey, complacently, "and, what's more, it's my own. Now come in, do. You must be dying for a bite and a sup," and unheeding any remonstrance she drew Kitty into a small, nicely-furnished room, where a very substantial meal was spread.

"You only want a bit more colour in your face to make you perfect," she said, as they discussed the dainties before them, "and this is just the sort of place to get it. I am sure I hope you'll be happy. I know I'll do my best to make you so."

And she was as good as her word. Thoroughly illiterate, she was yet thoroughly kind, and had a certain innate delicacy many a lady might have envied. Kitty found plenty to do; but her work was so sweetened by kindness, her comfort so much considered, that but for the thought of Rupert she would have been quite happy.

Every day Mrs. Shippey sent her to walk on the beach, or would persuade her to row over to a small island lying at a short distance from them, and soon the girl grew quite expert with the sculls. This island, called St. Olaf's, was a favourite place for picnics, but it was quite uninhabitable, because at high tide it was totally submerged, and consequently dangerous to any passing vessel.

The months were by, and Kitty daily gathered fresh strength and beauty; but it hurt Mrs. Shippey often to see the sorrowful shadows in her eyes, the downward droop of the sweet mouth. Touched by her goodness, Kitty had confided her little story to her, suppressing nothing but names, and it was the landlady's desire that she should forget her gentleman lover. She noticed that one or two young tradesmen were particularly attentive to her *protégé*, and for her own sake as well as Kitty's she wished the girl to settle down at Corneystone.

"You'd be happier, my dear," she said, "than if you married into a family as wouldn't acknowledge you." But Kitty shook her head.

"I shall never marry unless I marry Rupert, and that will never be, unless his father relents. I will not hurt him."

"But don't you think you're hurting him in keeping yourself hid up from him? And if he's a man he'll laugh at his friends, and learn to get a living for you and him."

"You forget. He has never known anything but luxury. Poverty would be doubly hard for him to bear," and there the subject ended. But Kitty thought to herself, "Forget you, my darling! Ah, no, no, no! You stooped from your high estate to love me; you honoured me above all women; and so long as I live I will be faithful and true, even though we never meet again, and you (forgetting me) take another love to yourself."

So November came, unusually mild and bright, and one morning, when Kitty returned from a shopping expedition, Mrs. Shippey met her in the hall, with every appearance of excitement.

"What has happened?" said Kitty, tossing aside hat and muff.

"Oh! my dear, I feel quite important. The drawing-room floor is taken by such a nice old gentleman—and big swell, too, Admiral Kennedy. We must try to make him comfortable!"

Kitty stared at her with wide eyes, and her face grew so suddenly white that Mrs. Shippey said,—

"Ain't you well, dear? What is it? Lor! you look like a ghost!"

"It is nothing; I was only a little startled. Dear Mrs. Shippey, do not let me see the new lodger. He—he is Rupert's father."

"You don't say so! Well, I'm sorry I let him the rooms, the old wretch; but I don't see very well how I can afford to send him packing."

"Do nothing of the sort. Why should you? I question if he would know me again, and after all I need not see him. If you let Jane wait upon him I will undertake to do her work."

"Indeed, you won't," bluntly. "I'll see to the old tarbar myself; so don't worry or fash yourself about it. But all the same I wish he hadn't come to Albuda-terrace."

CHAPTER VII.

A week passed slowly by, and, fearful of recognition, Kitty kept herself well hidden. She refused to take her daily walk, or the almost daily row to St. Olaf's, and Mrs. Shippey grumbled that she was growing pale and "peaky."

Once she caught a glimpse of Admiral Kennedy, and her tender heart ached at the change she saw in him. Her eyes (keener

than his) had pierced through the gloom on that June night, and seen a bronzed, healthy face; now the cheeks had fallen in, and the eyes were very sombre.

She guessed then that Rupert and he had quarrelled terribly, and that no reconciliation had taken place since.

Nothing was harder to bear than that knowledge. Rupert disgraced, perhaps disowned for her sake. Oh, she was not worthy such love and such sacrifice.

She had been tossed hither and thither on the ocean of life; she had weathered many a storm, suffered many a hardship, but nothing seemed so hard to her as this.

"I wish he had never seen me," she said again and again. "He was happy and contented until then. Oh, love! my love! I who would die to ensure your welfare have brought you nothing but trouble."

Brooding much over Rupert's troubles stole all her brightness from her, and Mrs. Shippey grew anxious.

"Now," she said, in an authoritative tone, "I ain't going to stand this nonsense any longer. Who is the Admiral that you need fear him? And ten chances to one he wouldn't know you if he met you; so just put on your hat and cloak, and go for a good walk along the beach. There, I won't take any refusal; you're looking as pale as a Christmas rose. Folks'll be saying I starve you."

Laughing a little, Kitty dressed and went out. It was a fine clear day, with the slightest suspicion of frost, and before her the sea lay spread like a sheet of silver, for the sun shone full upon it.

Kitty drew a deep breath of delight. After all, life was worth living when the world was so fair.

"If only we were together," she whispered to herself, "how happy we could be here!"

She went along the narrow path by the cliffs, and the rapid walking brought a slight flush to the dainty face, a light to the usually sad eyes.

On and on she went, until the fading light warned her it was time to return. With a half sigh she set her face towards home, and was within sight of Albuda-terrace when she was accosted by "Darky Jim," an old boatman who was a great favourite with Mrs. Shippey's lodgers.

"If you please, miss," he said, touching his cap, "would you be kind enough to tell me what that dark thing over at St. Olaf's is? Pears to me it's a man; and if 'tis there ain't no time to lose in getting him off. The tide's comin' up fast now."

Kitty stood with her hand shading her eyes a moment; then she said,—

"Yes, Jim, it is a man, and there is no time to lose. We must get him off the island with all possible speed."

"The sea is rollin', miss; and I don't know as how I could manage the boat alone," Jim said dubiously.

"I'll go with you. I am not afraid," and without further parley she got into the boat. "Give me the sculls, Jim. When I am tired you can take them," and smiting the action to the word she made for the island.

The wind had changed now, and the sea was running high; but Kitty's heart did not fail her, and Darky Jim did not know what fear meant. He rowed in silence for some time, then he said,—

"I guessed something was amiss more than a hour ago, for I saw a 'hempty' boat go sailin' off towards Rockyville, and I said, 'There's been a accident.' Only you see, miss, my eyes ain't what they was, and though I thought I heard shouts I couldn't see nothin' nohow."

Kitty made no reply. She was horribly

alive to the rising of the tide; there was such a little strip of land left now for the unfortunate man to stand firm upon. She lifted her voice, and cried to him to be of good cheer. It was a very faint shout that answered her. But in less time than she had thought possible they reached the island; and heedless of the rushing water, of all save the peril in which one man stood, Kitty sprang out, and gathering her skirts about her, waded through the waves and came at last to—Admiral Kennedy!

For a moment she was staggered, but quickly recovering herself, she said,—

"Come at once! We have no time to lose! How ill you look? Lean on me, and you can tell us how your accident happened as we go homeward."

"I am faint," the Admiral answered, in a weak voice. "I've been here nearly three hours, and my arm is anything but easy. I can't tell you how it happened, but as I was stepping from my boat it shot from under me and landed me on the shingle with my arm doubled under me, and I reckon it's broken. I think I fainted. Anyhow, when I realised what had happened my boat was far enough out at sea."

"Come," said Kitty, offering her hand, "we must be going. Delay is dangerous. Where shall we take you?"

"To Albuda-terrace, please" (quite meekly). "My landlady is Mrs. Shippey."

"Then you are Admiral Kennedy. Mrs. Shippey has told me about you. I am her clerk, assistant and friend. Steady, please. The sea is rougher than I could wish," and gently as she could she drew him to the little boat, where Darky Jim sat the picture of impatience.

"Hurry up, miss," he said. "It ain't too pleasant along this 'gre coast at dark, and it's hardly light now."

Once at Albuda-terrace the Admiral turned gratefully to Kitty.

"You are a good and brave girl, and as pretty as you are brave. You have saved my life to-day, and there is nothing you can ask that I will refuse you. Tell me your name, my dear."

"They call me Kitty," she answered, quietly, and turned away.

* * * * *

The Admiral had been very ill. He had broken his right arm very badly, and the wetting he had got whilst stranded on St. Olaf's had brought on a low fever, which prostrated him terribly. And in all, through all, he insisted on Kitty's attendance.

"You have a sweet voice, my dear!" he said, "and it matches your face. If Heaven had seen fit to give me a daughter I would have had her fashioned after your style. What are your people about to let you go out into the world like this, for I reckon Mrs. Shippey is not related to you?"

"Oh, no! but she is so kind to me, and I love her dearly. I have neither father nor mother, nor a relative in all the wide world."

"Poor little girl! But one day you will marry, and then all things will be changed and brightened for you!"

She made no answer, but he thought he saw the sheen of tears in her lovely eyes, and wondered a little over her emotion. He would have wondered still more could he have heard her cry a little later.

"Rupert! Rupert! my love, my love! Life is so hard to bear—so hard, and I am so weak!"

Daily she reads to the Admiral, and wrote the few letters he desired, but never a message was sent to the offending son; and often she wondered at this, often fretted in secret that Rupert should be cast out of his father's love. But there came a morning when the Admiral seemed

unusually facetious, and nothing would please him save Kitty's journeying to Wheatfield, the neighbouring town, in search of "Macaulay's Essays," and no sooner had she gone than he rang for Mrs. Shippey. She came quickly, and asked, half defiantly,

"What is it, sir? I think you rang."

"I want you to write a letter to my son; and I do not wish Miss—Miss—"

"Miss Kitty," said the landlady, as he paused.

"I don't wish Miss Kitty to know anything of it. By the way, what is her surname?"

"Well, really, sir, I can't see how that concerns you. She's never been called anything else but Miss Kitty since she came here. But I'm ready enough to write your letter, if you ain't too particular about spelling and writing."

"Sit down, then," said the sailor. "I've been thinking, Mrs. Shippey, that my nurse and my son are well suited to each other."

"Lor! sir, Miss Kitty's got a beau, and your son must be smart to cut him out," said Mrs. Shippey, with a mischievous gleam in her still handsome eyes. "But her sweetheart's father is a bit of a fool, and don't know when his son's well off, and won't hear of a wedding." Here the Admiral groaned, but Mrs. Shippey paid no heed to him, only went on coolly, "I'm ready now, sir, if you'll please to say what I'm to write."

So the Admiral dictated, and Mrs. Shippey wrote:

"DEAR RUPERT,—

"Don't you think we have been strangers long enough? If you are willing to be friends, I am. Don't trouble to answer this. If you are as sick as I am of this estrangement you will be with me to-morrow. I expect you."

A. KENNEDY."

* * * * *

"You are very restless to-day," said Kitty, as the Admiral went to the window for the fiftieth time. "Is not you arm so easy?"

"Yes, Miss Kitty, but I have a troublesome conscience, I'm afraid. Anyhow, I can't keep quiet. But you, child, sit down and talk to me. I like to hear your pleasant voice. I often wish you were my daughter; and I am not likely to forget you saved my life."

Her eyes shone through a mist of tears, as she answered, "I did very little for you, sir. I would do far more than that."

The door was opened with a flourish, and Mrs. Shippey said demurely,—

"Your son, sir!"

The old man started up.

"Welcome, Rupert! welcome a thousand times!" but the son's eyes had gone beyond him to that quiet figure, that sweet, startled face, and he gave a great cry of "Kitty! Kitty!" and went towards her with outstretched arms.

She forgot everything then—all her pain, all her sick longing and fears; even the Admiral's presence, as she ran into his embrace, sobbing out,—

"At last! at last! Oh, Rupert, I am content now to die!"

"Eh, what?" cried the Admiral, "what the deuce does this mean?"

"This, father; that unless I marry Kitty I will never call any woman wife. Can't you see for yourself, father, she is just the one girl in the world for me?"

"Well, I'm blest," said the Admiral. "I have been regularly sold. Kitty, you small witch, come here. Can you ever forgive me my folly and harshness? I was stupid enough to think a girl must needs be a lady

born to be worthy my son. Will you kiss me and call me father?"
Her sweet eyes shone through her happy tears.

"I will love you for Rupert's sake," she said, and, bending, laid her fresh young lips to his.

"And I will be your dutiful and affectionate child—father!"

"And what to me, Kitty?" asked Rupert, in a whisper.

She hid her face on his breast, whilst under her breath, she said,—

"Your loyal, loving wife; dearly devoted to you through all my days."

All her trials now were ended, all the rough voyaging on the "ocean of life," and she was safe in the harbour now—the happiest wife and daughter, soon the happiest mother in all the land.

Dunstan Kennedy died suddenly, and his widow went to live with Rupert and his pretty wife; and his opposition to the marriage is a standing joke between her and the Admiral. Mrs. Shippey is not forgotten; and every summer she spends a whole blissful fortnight with "Miss Kitty and the babies," always declaring staunchly that, but for her, the union never would have taken place. And the Admiral—well, he simply worships Rupert's wife.

THE END.

LOVE'S QUESTIONING.

They tell me that love is an idle word,
The dream of an hour, the thrill of a bird;
As flowers that bloom fairest are first to decay,
So the gold of heart-idols turns soonest to clay.

They tell me that vows are but breathings of sin
That torture and madden the hearts they would win.
And, as pale the bright stars at the coming of day,
They fade in their sweetness and vanish away.

I have felt thy dark eyes gazing fondly in mine,
Till my soul in its dreaming was lost, love, in thine.

I have felt thy warm breath gently sweeping my cheek,
While the throbbing of hearts told what lips could not speak.

Can it be, can it be that thy lips will grow cold,
That thy love will not always my being enfold.
And when hushed in the music of love's tender tone
Thy heart will forget it must love me alone?

I love thee, I trust thee, I will not believe;
Thy soul hath no error, no thought to deceive;
Like a bird to its nest, its sad wandering done,
Loving and trusting thee, darling, I come.

In cold countries, where snow prevails during a long winter, many of the animals change the hue of their coats to a white tint. The Arctic bear and fox are white throughout the year. The northern hare is brown in summer and white in winter. The weasel is especially curious; it retains its brown coat until the first snow appears, and then whitens in a few hours.

Statistics

THE report of the Commissioners of Prisons for the year ended March 31, 1901, contains some interesting and important statistics bearing on the question of the increase or decrease of crime relative to the population. The number of prisoners received during the past year in local prisons under sentence of the ordinary Courts was 148,600, besides 4,079 soldiers and sailors sentenced by courts-martial. There were also 12,576 persons imprisoned as debtors, or on civil process, and 1,539 in default of sureties, making a total of 166,794. The corresponding numbers for the preceding year were, respectively, convicted by the ordinary Courts, 153,460; by courts-martial, 1,743; debtors and civil process, 12,302; in default of sureties, 1,802; total, 169,367.

Gems

HUMILITY, like darkness, reveals heavenly light.

THE anger of to-day is the remorse of tomorrow.

ONLY the great soul can abstain from mean words.

WHAT a holiday is for the body, holy day is to the soul!

NIP evil in the bud, then it won't nip you in the bloom.

THE way to keep out of harm is to keep out of harm's way.

NO treasure was ever stolen from the Heavenly Trust Deposit.

WE have time for the longest duty, but not for the shortest sin.

THE lost man can never be saved by the power of his lost will.

THE Book of Life will last when all other biographies have passed away.

Matrimonial Firms.

HUSBAND and wife should always consider themselves members of a matrimonial firm, and both should be familiar with all business secrets. If they would recognise the fact that they are business partners, and that each should know the financial standing of the firm—the debts and their assets—many of the troubles of matrimonial life would be avoided.

It is exceedingly hard for a man to find his wife spending money—probably very hardly earned—on some bauble or luxury which he would not feel justified in buying for her, unless his income were double what it is. The chances are that he reproves her for her recklessness and extravagance, thereby rousing her indignation, and very likely laying himself open to the charge of stinginess, and also of injustice.

It is quite probable that instead of being stingy he is rather over-indulgent to her, but it is very likely that he has not treated her justly. He has never thought of her as his business partner, and, though he has given her the right to handle a certain amount of his money, he has not explained to her exactly how he stands financially, so that she has no idea of the necessity for economy.

Instead of having any secrets regarding money matters, there should be entire frankness between husband and wife from the very first. The wife as junior partner, will have keen interest in increasing the prosperity of the firm, and not only will misunderstandings be avoided, but the bond of mission will be strengthened between her and her husband in mutual confidence and advice concerning the household treasury.

Society

BALMORAL, where the King and Queen are now in residence, dates as a Royal Castle, from as far back as 1848. At that time, the keeper of the Queen's health was Sir James Clark. Sir James had an observant son John, afterwards Sir John. The son had pointed out to the father that there was no place like the Deeside for summer and autumn sojourn, where, in addition to scenic attractions, there was to be found that particular sort of dry and bracing air which was so eminently suitable for the "peculiar constitutions" of her Majesty and Prince Albert.

THE Queen and Prince Albert occupied Balmoral for the first time in the September of 1848. That year Parliament was prorogued late. As soon as that function was over the Queen and the Prince embarked at Woolwich, where the Royal Squadron was in waiting, and reached Aberdeen by sea, some twenty-four hours before their time. However, the twenty-four hours were fully occupied between the universities, the museum, the quarries, and the bestowal of the freedom of the city on the Prince. Next day they drove to Ballater, and that night, September 8, was their first in the Highland residence that neither ever tired of.

IN her "Leaves from a Journal of Our Life in the Highlands," the late Queen has recorded her earliest impressions of Balmoral, and how "all seemed to breathe freedom and peace, and makes one forget the world and its turmoil." The Prince Consort writes in much the same strain, "We have withdrawn for a short time," he says, "into a mountain solitude where one rarely sees the human face, and where snow already crowns the summits."

THE King, among other rearrangements at Balmoral, has converted into a very fine billiard-room the apartment under the Tower which Queen Victoria used as a sort of improvised chapel. No such beautiful billiard-table as the new one now set up ever found its way to one of her late Majesty's residences. For all that, the King is a little of a player himself, his indoor amusement becoming more and more confined to various games of cards.

THE announcement that the King will hold Court at Holyrood after the Coronation festivities next June, means a good deal to Edinburgh, for, while the late Queen Victoria on several occasions visited the ancient Palace, her Majesty never took up residence there, nor have any Royal functions been held within its walls since the visit of George IV. to Scotland in 1822. His Majesty stayed there a few days towards the end of 1859, while he was a student of the Edinburgh University. Save for the Royal visit in 1871, and the annual functions of the Royal visit in 1871, and the annual functions of the Lord High Commissioner, the Palace has since been uninhabited. It is still, however, kept in good repair, and a few months ago the Royal apartments were in the hands of the decorators and upholsterers.

IT is now quite certain that the betrothal of the Czarewitch to the Princess Margaret of Connaught has been decided on, and it is likely that the engagement will be made public before long. The birth of a fourth daughter to the Czar has made the people despair of seeing an heir born to His Majesty, and the marriage of the Czarewitch will be very popular in Russia. The Duchess of Connaught can count a Czar amongst her ancestors, as her paternal grandmother was the granddaughter of the Czar Paul.

WITHOUT A REFERENCE.

By the Author of "Diana's Diamonds," "The Gardener's Daughter," &c.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

At the age of two years Sylvia Paske, who is motherless, is taken by her father to the Convent of Ramnase Bhim Tal, N. W. Province of India, where she remains for more than 15 years. Mr. Paske takes no interest in his daughter's welfare beyond seeing that the fees are regularly paid and once writing to the Sister Superior to say that if Sylvia is not prepared to take the veil she is to leave the Convent at 18. Sylvia, however, is not disposed to lead the life of a recluse. Conscious of her own powers she longs to take her place in the great world of men and women. The day arrives when she has to say "good-bye" to her dear friends at the convent and goes so stay with a Mr. and Mrs. Cook. Sylvia cannot agree with her new landlady, and determines at all costs to get to England. This she does as the maid of Mrs. Plummer, who makes quite a confidante of her. At Malta she goes ashore, and, not knowing the evil reputation of some of the streets, finds herself surrounded by a gang of desperadoes, and is only saved by the timely arrival of Roger Hyde. Sylvia discovers that it is a far from easy matter to obtain work in London without a friend, especially when she is robbed of the only paper that could have assisted her—a character from Mrs. Plummer. She finds a companion in a poor girl, and together they manage to exist until one falls ill and their funds are exhausted. Then, as a flower girl, Sylvia meets Roger Hyde once more, and he, in a fit of despair at having to find a wife within a few days, proposes to and marries this penniless girl. Roger takes a furnished house at Twickenham for his wife and her friend Jessie, during the enforced absence at Malta. Bernard Hyde, stung to jealousy by the good fortune that has come to Roger, is striking with might and main to find some flaw in Roger's title to his uncle's fortune. In the meantime the failure of Sylvia to fully establish her identity is likely to prove an obstacle in the path of her husband, but she determines to make Mr. Paske reveal himself as her lawful father.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DID you hear the dog howling last night right under these windows?" said Mrs. Becker, the superstitious, one morning soon after the letter was despatched to Malta. " You all know what that means," looking at the nurse and housemaid significantly.

" Oh, Mrs. Becker, nonsense!" said the former.

" Wait till you see if it is nonsense," said Mrs. Becker, solemnly. " There was a winding-sheet in the candle last night, and a coffin in the fire. Oh, I know what I am talking of well enough; there will be a funeral here soon. Mark what I say, and it will not be yours or mine."

" Well, she certainly do seem very weak and breathless this morning," admitted the nurse. " She is not by any means as well as she was a week ago."

" Poor dear!" said the housemaid. " She do suffer. When it comes it will be a happy release."

" Oh! it is not coming quite so soon as all that," said Sister Susan, rising. " If she gets over March she may pass the Summer. Some of these consumptive cases are very tedious. She is a splendid patient, poor girl. She never complains."

" And the mistress is wrapt up in her," said the housemaid, " though they are no relations, are they?"

" No!" returned the nurse scornfully. " How could they? Mrs. Hyde is a lady born, as any one that deals with her can see. The other is not. Just a daughter of a respectable yeoman. She told me so herself. Ay, and how she do so yearn, poor soul, for the trees, and the birds, and the country. She looks out of the window into the garden, and lies drinking it all in with her eyes, and not stirring for hours—quite happy."

" They were very poor before they came here," said cook. " A queer business. You brought Miss Case along from some garret in Whitechapel, nurse?"

" I did, and I never thought to get her

here alive; and it was her great wish, and her spirits kept her up."

The night after this conversation there was a sudden ringing of bells about midnight, a rushing about, and a running for doctors.

Miss Case had broken a blood-vessel, and was going fast at last. When morning broke she was gone, and her friend sat weeping beside her, holding her cold hand.

" She felt it surprisingly!" so said the servants. She refused the toast, port wine, or any of the creature comforts usually prescribed for grief!

She wept, and remained aloof and alone, and saw no one.

The undertaker received orders for a superior funeral. The coffin was to be in white, not black cloth, and the locality of the grave was chosen with as much care by Mrs. Hyde herself as if it were the site of a gold mine. It faced west, and was under a bush of white hawthorn.

The funeral cortège was small—merely the doctor, Mrs. Hyde, the nurse, and servants; and soon after the day of the funeral a white marble cross was erected, "To the memory of Jessie Case, by her friend."

No name, merely the date, and Jessie's age.

Now that she was gone, and the invalid's room, once the centre of all the interest and occupation in the house cold and empty—carpets up, curtains down, windows open—there seemed so little to do!

Mrs. Hyde had a wretched appetite, and required but little waiting on. She went for long walks. She sat over the fire in idleness for hours; in short, to quote the servants, "she was a terrible one to fret and mope." What was she to do now? she was asking herself.

Jessie, her first care, was gone. She need no longer cling to wealth and luxuries for poor Jessie's sake. A strong active girl like herself must be up and doing!

She had money in her pocket, though her allowance, like Roger's, must soon end. She had one hundred and fifty pounds in the bank in her own name. She would draw it out; or was it Bernard's money? No, at present it was hers, part of her unspent allowance.

She had good clothes, a watch and chain, a house over her head for the present. She wrote to Mrs. Glasher, and gave her a sketch of her history, and her interview with Mr. Paske.

She sent the two girls pretty dresses, and Mrs. Glasher a new black silk; and she owed nothing to anyone. Yes, she had money, recovered health and looks, a watch and chain, clothes, and credit. In short, she had everything she required at present except a character—a most essential matter if she was going, as she hoped, to take service with Mr. Paske. She advertised boldly for Mrs. Plummer. A line beginning—

" Penguin, from Calcutta to London. Mrs. Plummer is requested to send her address to S. P., Post-office, Twickenham;" but no address and no answer. Erratic Mrs. Plummer was possibly back in Simla; and after a few weeks' waiting Mrs. Hyde gave it up in despair. She had no resource left but to give herself as reference.

She accordingly went into the town, taking a dress in a Gladstone bag, and attired herself in the waiting-room at the terminus, with the result, that when she went in a well-dressed lady she walked out of it, to all appearance, a smart lady's maid!

She repaired to a registry office for ser-

vants—a bookseller's shop not very far from Eaton-place, and stated her wants.

" She would like a nice family. No objection to two ladies. Could be well recommended. Could dress hair, travel, speak French. Wanted a situation in Eaton-place, or near it, as she had a friend in the neighbourhood."

The young man ran his finger down the page, wet it, and turned over. No, not in Eaton-place or Eaton-square. Would Grosvenor-street do?

" Stay, Richard," said his mother, " Did I not hear that the Paske's maid had given notice, and that is 999, Eaton-place?"

Sylvia's heart bounded.

" Maybe; but they have not come here about another."

" Perhaps they will," faltered Sylvia, " and I am sure I would do my very best to suit."

" It would have to be your very best, I can tell you, miss. No second best there. The young ladies give no end of worry. No one stops more than a month. They are always on our books for ladies' maids."

" Still I might try. I am so anxious to get a situation near my cousin, that if you can get me this one I'll be happy to pay a double fee."

She would have thought the place cheap at fifty pounds. What a chance fate had thrown in her way, and she was actually trembling with anxiety!

" I see you are very anxious, my dear," said the woman; " and, of course, it's a convenience to be near your young man. I suppose he is a footman?"

Sylvia coughed and became very red, and this was counted unto her for modesty.

" Well, you may be sure I'll do what I can. Please leave your address and half-a-crown."

Sylvia wrote,—

S. Parr, care of Mrs. Hyde, The Lindens, Twickenham, and placed half-a-crown beside it, and departed in haste.

" A nice-looking girl," said the young man, looking after her. " I am sorry she has got a sweetheart, for I would not mind being her young man myself."

" Nonsense, Richard. I suppose she will go to Paske's. Poor girl! If she does she will suffer for her sins. They say that eldest girl has an awful temper."

Sylvia went home—having changed her dress at the station in a great flutter of excitement and expectation. If she secured this place she would give up The Lindens, dismiss the servants, give the key to her agents and disappear as Mrs. Hyde, a lady of means, to reappear as Sara Parr in the servant's hall!

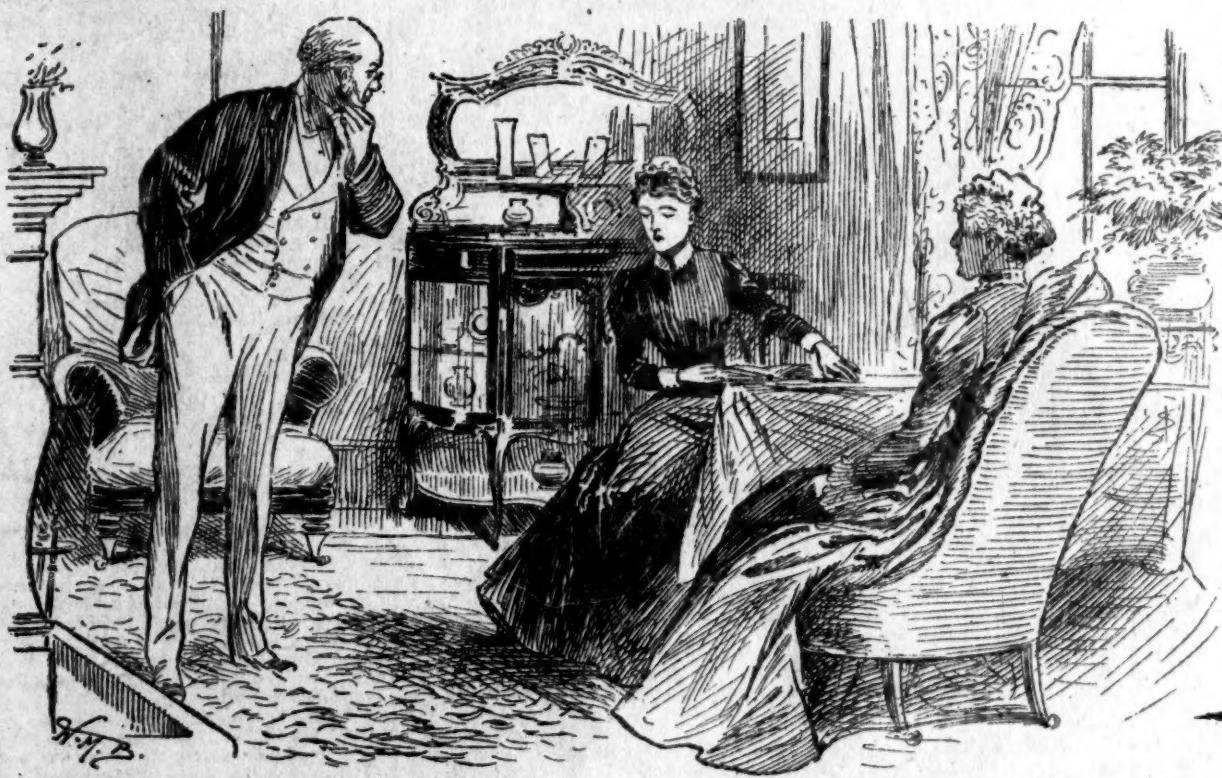
In two days she received a letter.

" Mrs. Paske presented her compliments to Mrs. Hyde, and would be glad to hear if she could recommend her ladies' maid, a young person of the name of Parr, who had applied for a situation in her establishment."

Mrs. Hyde accordingly sat down with a good pen and a very thick sheet of paper, and presented her compliments to Mrs. Paske, and said,—

" That she had much pleasure in recommending Sara, and was only parting with her as she herself was about to leave home and did not require her service. Sara was a most efficient maid, understood millinery and hair-dressing. Was a capital packer, and, if required, a good sick nurse. She read aloud pleasantly, was good tempered and willing. In fact Mrs. Hyde could not praise her too highly, and wherever she went she carried with her her best wishes."

" Now I am all right," said Sara, as she closed and stamped her self-endowed refer-



"BY THE WAY," MR. PASKE SAID ONE DAY QUITE SUDDENLY TO SARA, "WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?"

ence. "That is to say, as long as she does not ask for a personal interview."

But alas! this was just what Mrs. Paske did require. She actually drove down to Twickenham one afternoon.

Mrs. Hyde, with great presence of mind, guessed at her visitor before she rang the bell. She had caught a glimpse of a carriage full of ladies and a pair of shining bay horses, and rushing to the parlour-maid, said,—

"I'm not going to see these people. Say I am out."

She listened breathless over the balustrades. If they asked to see Sara Parr—and Sara Parr was not known there—the game was up, and she was lost! Luckily the footman made no further inquiries, and she breathed again; but she must put a stop to these descents on Twickenham, and that at once. She wrote to say,—

"She was sorry she had missed Mrs. Paske, and that as she was going abroad at once it would be well if Mrs. Paske were to meet her in town ere she left. Her time was greatly occupied, but if Mrs. Paske would be at the waiting-room at Waterloo Station at six the next day she would meet her there, and answer any questions about her maid, though she herself, in engaging servants, was satisfied with the lady's letter, and did not require an interview. Please wire reply."

The answer came,—

"Will meet you at place and hour. Would wish to see Sara Parr at same time."

"Impossible!" ejaculated Sara. "I cannot be two people at once!" and she laughed. "I can easily make excuses, and send her Sara the next day. Now I have to think of my make-up. Grey hair, and spectacles, an elderly style of bonnet, and

a lisp. I think that will about do for respectable Mrs. Hyde, who has just ten minutes to spare before her train goes!"

CHAPTER XXV.

At the house mentioned Mrs. Paske, and her own daughter, Miss Pontifex, drove up to Waterloo Station, and entered the rendezvous—the ladies' first-class waiting-room—a waiting-room indeed, to many!

They sat expectantly for ten minutes; then indignantly, for ten more. They were becoming furious, and Sara's prospects were getting decidedly gloomy, when a tall, elderly lady came hurriedly in, and looked about her.

She was, as I have said, tall; but she was also slight and erect. She wore a handsome fur-lined travelling cloak, and black bonnet and veil. She also wore spectacles, and her hair, which was dressed in a thick fringe, was almost white.

"May I ask if you are Mrs. Paske?" she inquired, halting before that lady, who was simmering with anger.

Mrs. Paske, whose majesty was much ruffled, bowed in her stiffest manner.

"Then, I am Mrs. Hyde, and am exceedingly sorry not to have been more punctual; but the fact is that I am on the eve of going abroad, and you know how much there is to be thought of at the last minute; and as it is I can only stay five minutes. I must positively catch the next train."

"Oh!" huffily. "I wish I had known, for my time is precious too, and I would not have come!"

"I have been so hurried at the last. I am going to-morrow morning, and I did not

intend starting so soon; but my friend, the Princess of Saragossa, who is staying at Claridge's Hotel, insists on my accompanying her. It was she who detained me."

Mrs. Paske brightened. Much could be forgiven to a woman who had been detained by a friend who was a Princess!

Of course, Sara invented this bold, bad lie on the spot. She saw that it required a bold stroke to win the day, and she was prepared to go a long way in order to gain a footing in her enemy's stronghold. All was fair in love and war, and this was war to the knife!

"And what can I tell you about Sara? Moments are precious;" said Mrs. Hyde, as she seated herself.

"We thought the young woman would have been here this evening," said Miss Pontifex, in an outraged tone.

"No; to tell the truth I could not possibly spare her. She will wait on you to-morrow, at any hour you name."

"Very well. At eleven o'clock punctually."

"Has she been with you long?"

"Almost all her life. I have trained her and brought her up."

"Is she perfectly respectable?" said Mrs. Paske.

"Perfectly, my dear madam. I am astonished at your asking me such a question when I have just assured you that she has been with me for years!" said the Princess's friend, with a grand air, and holding her head very high.

"And how old is she?" inquired Mrs. Paske, a little cowed.

"About twenty-three!" boldly adding on three years.

"And good-tempered?"

"Yes!"

"In fact a most efficient servant. Does hair-dressing, millinery, lace-mending?"

"Yes, a perfect treasure!"

"And what wages have you given her?"

"Well, I am a wealthy woman," lisped the old lady, in a patronising manner. "I give her thirty pounds, and all found."

Why, she said to herself, should they not pay her well out of what she was convinced was her own money.

"Thirty pounds!" echoed Mrs. Paske.

"Why, I never give more than twenty!"

"Really! Well, you cannot have a trained person, of course, for kitchen-maid's wages!" raising her eyebrows high above her spectacles. "Sara won't take less—indeed, she may ask more. If you do not feel disposed to engage her she can get a place to-morrow with a friend of the Princess's—I mean the Princess of Sarragoza. I would not have spared all this time on her behalf had I not wished to see her in a comfortable situation before I left England," and with a bow she was about to sweep out of the room.

Mother and daughter exchanged glances. The daughter's eyes said "take her;" and hurrying after Mrs. Hyde, Mrs. Paske said,—

"You can tell Sara Parr that if I find she is a nice-looking young person—is she?"

"Yes."

"Then I shall engage her on your recommendation. Sorry to have given you so much trouble; but I always require not only a reference, but a personal interview with a former mistress."

"Good-bye!" I will give her your message;" and Mrs. Hyde hurried away as the bell rang the direction of the trains for Twickenham.

As Mrs. Paske and her daughter by her first marriage drove away, they said they thought Mrs. Hyde decidedly an impious and off-hand old lady; but it was a good thing to take a maid from a woman who evidently mixed in the highest society, as it was evident Mrs. Hyde did.

Mrs. Paske worshipped what she called "the best society." As Mrs. Pontifex, a widow with one daughter, she had struggled to swim with the brass pots.

She made frantic efforts to get invitations, and to be seen everywhere.

She was left badly off—her husband, the younger son of a good old, but impoverished family; and to dress well, and have a tiny house in a fashionable part of the town, she almost starved herself and her servants. What shifts she resorted to! What meanness about coals, gas, and meat! Were they not all recorded in the servants' halls in her own neighbourhood?

She certainly made a noble outward appearance on a small income. She had little over three hundred a-year, besides what she made by letting her house in the height of the season, and going to stay with friends, or, failing friends, into cheap lodgings.

Who would think, to see Mrs. Pontifex walking in the park, beautifully dressed in the last fashion, and escorted by a couple of men, that she would presently make an excuse for quitting them, and go home in a penny bus to a dinner of herrings and dry bread!

She was a fair, stylish-looking woman. She appeared to be rich, fashionable, and in a good set.

Mr. Paske, said to be a nabob, lately home from India, and wishing to settle and to get into society, and to see a good-looking woman at the head of his house, proposed, after a short acquaintance, a little dinner at her house, sent in from the pastrycooks, and perfect in its way, a trip to Ascot, a few walks in the row, proposed, and was accepted.

After the honeymoon there was an awakening for both. He discovered that his bride had but a small fortune and large debts, that many of her grand friends were merely borrowing acquaintances, though when people discovered that she had married money, and had gone into a fine house in Eaton-place, cards and invitations began to come in thick and fast.

She discovered that her second husband was not a nabob. He came from Australia, though he had been in India. Also that he had a strong will, a temper, and a secret.

They had one child, a daughter, Amelia, dark-eyed, impulsive, clever girl of seventeen, and then there was "Victoria," Mrs. Pontifex's own daughter, aged twenty-five, tall and sandy, with a beautiful skin and profile, but spoiled by white eyebrows and lashes, and small pig-like blue eyes.

She ruled her mother, who was now a thin faded lady, with a somewhat red nose (constitutional), and a languid manner.

Both mother and daughter were most extravagant in their habits, and did not spare Mr. Paske's pocket. The household was in two factions, Mrs. Paske and Miss Pontifex, Mr. Paske and his daughter Amy; his bright-eyed treasure, the apple of his eye.

The two factions got on remarkably well, though one liked the country, the other town. One liked balls, dinners, theatres, shopping; the other preferred quiet, home comforts, tennis, and riding. It was seldom they came into conflict.

Each had their turn—Mrs. Paske when the family were in town, Mr. Paske when they were ruralising at the "Hermitage," near Walmer.

Punctually as a neighbouring church clock struck eleven Sara Parr rang at 99, Eaton-place, and was shown into a lower room, and then requested to "step upstairs."

Mrs. Paske and her eldest daughter awaited her in a morning room, and received her respectful curtsey in silence, with a long stare.

"I have called, according to Mrs. Hyde's request," said Sara. "She said you had taken up my character as ladies'-maid."

"Yes, and from what she has said in your favour I am going to engage you," returned Mrs. Paske.

"Very well, madam. Am I to enter on my duties at once?"

"Well, yes. Anderson leaves to-day."

"Can I have a room to myself, madam?"

"Yes, it so happens that you can. You had better stay and send for your things. Where are they?"

"I left them at the station. If you will allow me, I will fetch them in a cab during the afternoon."

"Very well. Victoria, you are going out to lunch. You might as well allow her to dress your hair, and see how she manages. Go up to your room, Parr, and take off your things," ringing the bell as she spoke; and presently to the footman, "Tell Anderson to show this young woman her room. She will remain."

Sara followed the man, who conveyed her along some passages, and then upstairs, and then showed her a door.

"That's Anderson's room. I suppose you are the new maid, miss?"

"Yes."

"Well, I hope you'll stay. May I ask your name, miss?"

"Certainly. My name is Sara Parr."

"And mine William Hopkins. I hope we shall be good friends."

"I hope so, I am sure," she returned, sweetly.

She was going to make friends with all the household if she could. She knocked at the door, and a shrill voice said,—

"Come in."

She entered, and found a very trim, but cross-looking young woman on her knees, packing a tin box, that seemed overcrowded with clothes.

"Oh, so I suppose you are the new maid?" looking up.

"Yes. I was sent up here to take off my bonnet. I am to stay."

"For how long I wonder! I have been unusually long, six months, but flesh and blood couldn't stand it any longer."

"Couldn't stand what?"

"Miss Pontifex and her airs, and her temper, and all the trouble she gives. Law I do hate her."

"I must try and stand it, for I want a place badly," said Sara in a meek voice.

"Been out before?"

"Oh, yes."

"A long time in one situation?"

"Yes, some years."

"Some years! Why, you look quite young!"

"Oh, I am not as young as I look," apologetically.

"I wish that was the way with me. Now I look years older than I am. I am only twenty-four."

Sara accepted this immense untruth in silence, and then said,—

"Can I help you in any way?"

"Well, if you will just fold up those two dresses I shall be obliged. I am in a hurry. The sooner I am out of the house the better."

"Is there anything besides Miss Pontifex that you don't like?" said Sara, as she busied herself.

"Well, there's a lot of work. I wait on Mr. Paske too, not Miss Paske, Miss Amy,—the upper housemaid looks after her, and she is no trouble. I don't say much against the missus, but I can't stand Mr. Paske. He is bad-tempered and underhand. You never know when he will take you. He remembers things a long time, and he takes spite against people."

"Does he?" said Sara, with a faint smile, "and so do I."

"And, this is private—but, as I am going in ten minutes, I don't care if you do tell. He drinks something he has in a cupboard in his study, and stocks it at night on the sly. He is never seen intoxicated, and he is very moderate at meals, they say, but he locks himself up with his bottle alone. He is not always like that, only sometimes, generally after he has had a visit from an old friend, a Mr. Horne from South Australia. I suppose he puts him in mind of some old times that he don't care to think of, or something. Anyway, I have noticed, and so has Hopkins, that the last time Horne was here we did not see Mr. Paske for two days."

"You think they have some secret between them?"

"I don't know what to think. Don't you cross Mr. Paske if you want to stay here; and don't you grumble when Miss Pontifex keeps you up to amuse her till three o'clock in the morning, and expects you to bring her tea at eight o'clock, and to look as fresh as a daisy. She stays in bed, bless you, till twelve o'clock; but you will sit down and mend her ball dress. Well, my things are all ready, and I am off. I am going down now for my wages and character. If she don't give me a proper one I'll just have the law of her, but I don't expect she'll care to refuse my rights. Good-bye, and good luck to you!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

On the 28th of February Mr. Bernard Hyde arrived at Twickenham, and proceeded immediately to the Lindens. He had had a letter from his secret agent, so

he was quite prepared to see the house closed, the shutters shut. He had had a hurried scrawl to say,—

"DEAR SIR,—

"There is a new start sprung on us quite suddenly. The missus called us in last night, gave us notice to leave to-morrow, and a month's wages and our characters. She says she is giving up the house at once—and as it is a furnished one, she has only her clothes to carry away—but where she is bound for I cannot make out! I leave this to-morrow after I see the house cleaned down. The agent comes for the key at four o'clock.

Yours to command,

S. BUCKER."

The doors were locked, the shutters closed, the place empty. Mr. Hyde repaired to the local agents. Yes, the tenant was gone—the rent had been paid a year in advance. No she had not left her address, and said she did not care to sub-let. She might return before the year was out.

He tried the post-office. "No, Mrs. Hyde had left no address, and she scarcely ever got any letters."

She was gone!—had vanished and left no clue. The proofs he had required had frightened her back into the obscurity from which his booby of a cousin had dragged her. She had no certificates or parentage that would bear inspection, so she had fled—perhaps thinking that by so doing she would save the fortune to Roger. But she was much mistaken, as much as an ostrich who hides its head in the sand, and believes that all is well. He would take very decided legal steps at once, and enter into possession as soon as possible—possession of nine thousand a-year! Delicious prospect for a needy man!

Meanwhile, Roger Hyde at Malta had received Sara's letter—not pleasant reading, and still less agreeable were letters from Short and Sharp. The funds were cut off, the will was contested, and there was a chance that he had drawn his last cheque on his uncle's banker, and if that was the case, what was to become of him?

He could not get leave home to look into the business in person. He had already had far more than his share of leave, and could not whisper the word to the colonel or adjutant in orderly room. He must stay where he was, either that or "chuck the service," which he was not inclined to do, and he must only try and manage his affairs by pen, and he had still sufficient balance at the Malta Bank to keep his head above water for some time to come.

Meanwhile, all depended on the discovery of Mrs. Hyde's parentage, and Mrs. Hyde was not idle. She settled down into her new place wonderfully soon. As she had no followers, and required no Sunday out, she did not chafe, like Miss Jane Anderson. She accomplished her duties—dressed hair, dressed Mrs. Paske and Miss Pontifex, trimmed hats and bonnets, and made herself useful.

She read aloud to Mrs. Paske, sometimes on a wet day, and was occasionally present at stormy interviews between her master and mistress, when her mistress usually asked for money, and her master grumbly gave it, taking no more notice of the maid than if she were a lay figure.

"You spend money like water. Mrs. Paske," he said, one day. "Here is a bill for Miss Pontifex of two hundred pounds for furs. I suppose you imagine there is no end to my money? You are quite wrong. My income is fixed. I may be poorer, but I never can be richer. Some day I shall be a beggar if this goes on."

"Why don't you speculate?" she drawled, languidly.

"Yes, and lose every rap! Anyway, my capital is tied up, and I could not touch it if I would, and I have other expenses that you know nothing of in Australia."

"What expenses?" she asked, sourly.

"Oh, old retainers, poor relations, pensioners."

"By-the-way," he said one day quite suddenly to Sara, "Where did you come from? Your face and voice seem familiar; but for the life of me I cannot remember having seen you before. Where did Mrs. Paske pick you up?"

"I came from Twickenham, sir," she said, civilly.

"A Mrs. Hyde recommended her. A most distinguished-looking old lady," added Mrs. Paske, "a great friend of the Princess of Saragossa's!"

"Hyde! Twickenham!" he exclaimed. "Why, I had a visit from a lady of that name and address; but she was young, fixing his sharp dark eyes on Sara, who had white apprehension written on every line of her face. "Do you know her?"

"Yes! She was young Mrs. Hyde," she returned; "the old lady's daughter-in-law. She has gone away some time ago."

"Had been in India, had she not?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"A meddlesome young woman. Has she gone with her mother-in-law?"

"Yes, sir; at least I think so."

"And not likely to come back again?"

"I believe not."

"So much the better," and placing his hands in his pockets he slouched out of the room, and Sara breathed again.

"He never told me of that visit," said Mrs. Paske, irritably. "I wonder what in the world she wanted?"

Sara made no attempt at a reply, but, taking up her book said, "Shall I go on, ma'am?"

Once or twice she took a holiday, and went down to Twickenham, visited Jessie's grave, called at the post-office, and asked if there were any letters for Mrs. Hyde. She received one letter only. It was from Malta and from Roger, and began:—

"DEAR SYLVIA,—

"Your news is indeed bad. Unless you can produce proofs of your birth that will satisfy Bernard's lawyers, of course I have not a leg to stand on, and he sweeps the board. I cannot get leave, or I would be in England as soon as this letter. I must leave it to you entirely to puzzle out the truth. In the meanwhile, Short and Sharp have stopped supplies. I may get away from this in three months' time.

Yours truly, R. HYDE."

Three months elapsed, and the Paske family moved out of town, with thousands of others—all bound for the country, the seaside, or abroad. The Paskes went to their place, The Hermitage, near Walmer—a fine old house, standing in a small park that Mr. Paske rented on lease. It may have begun its career as a hermit's cell centuries before; but years had increased it, and it was now a large, rambling country house, warm, thanks to a southern aspect, and thick walls, and the sort of house that enjoyed your confidence at once. No ghost could possibly reside in such a cheerful-looking abode. There were pretty grounds, with winding walks, a fine old fruit garden, a rosery, and several tennis courts. Sara explored of an evening, when the family were at dinner, and liked all she saw immensely. She liked all she saw, and enjoyed the delicious English country air—the smell of the hay and flowers, the sound of the mower's scythe, and the booming of the bees in the horse-chestnuts. Once or twice in her rambles she came across a man—query, was he a

gentleman?—making his way up to the house on foot.

He was well-dressed, in rather a flashy sort of style, and always favoured her with a stare of an unmistakable admiration. Who was he? A friend of Mr. Paske's? He used to enter his smoking-room by the open French windows, and there await him, and she used to see them subsequently pacing the grounds side by side for an hour at a time.

He rarely came to the house by the hall door, but, all the same, he was well known to the other servants, who spoke of him as Mr. Horne—a queer sort of fish, and an old friend of Mr. Paske's. He was said to be shy, and a woman-hater, and disliked ladies. That was why he avoided the drawing-room and the society of Mrs. Paske and her daughters. If he disliked ladies he did not extend his dislike to ladies' maids!

Sara encountered him frequently, and it could not always be by chance. He would stare hard, and sweep off his hat and say, "Good evening," but as yet he had never got further, and why should he not get further? she asked herself. This smart-looking, very pretty ladies'-maid had taken it into her head that Mr. Horne was in Mr. Paske's confidence and knew a good many of his secrets, especially one that she was anxious to share.

Mr. Horne was from Australia. Was he not one of the many calls on Mr. Paske? He had no visible means of livelihood, and yet he never seemed to want money. Bold Sara Parr, Mr. Paske's pretty maid, resolved to make deliberate advances to Mr. Horne!

"If France was worth a mass," her fortune and her future were worth a smile. Next time she was taking the air after servants' tea, and she met Mr. Horne in the grounds. She lifted up her eyes and smiled bewitchingly—a smile that smote Mr. Horne to the heart, and that was a serious misfortune to Mr. Paske.

"Good evening," he said, and stood still. "A fine evening!"

"Yes, lovely!" she assented.

"You seem fond of walking?"

"Yes, I am. I come out when my work is done."

"And always alone?" he inquired, significantly.

"Yes, always alone," she answered, humorously.

"That is strange!"

"Why should it be?" she asked, archly.

"You are so pretty!" was the prompt reply.

"I may be—I suppose I am; but then there is no one there," pointing, "that I would care to walk with."

"I wonder if—if I—if you would care to walk with me?" looking at her with a pair of bold black eyes.

"I should be delighted, and much honoured, but would it not look strange?"

"Look? Who is there to see? We can walk in the woods and the shrubberies. As it is, not a soul ever enters there to take a turn but you and me; and as we are both fond of an evening stroll, why should we not stroll together?"

"Yes."

"Mrs. Paske and her girls are given up to tennis, and think of nothing but company!" he said.

"And Mr. Paske is not given up to tennis and company?" added Sara.

"No."

"What do you think of him?" he added.

"Oh, I scarcely know him. He seems to me to be rather out of his element. He does not shoot, or fish, or hunt. He must have a dull life, and very little to occupy his mind."

"Oh, not so dull as you suppose, and plenty to occupy his mind;" and Mr. Horne laughed a queer laugh. "Do you know that you are the prettiest girl I ever saw?"

"I am surprised at that," said Sara, coolly.

"Why?"

"Because you have been in so many countries. You have been in Australia. Lived there many years."

"Yes, and the Australian girls are not bad; but who told you I had been there?"

"The other servants—they know everything."

"Do they?" scornfully. "I am not so sure of that. Well, I must be going now. You will meet me here to-morrow evening, won't you?"

"Yes, on one condition."

"Name it."

"That you tell me plenty of nice interesting stories about Australia."

"Done with you," shaking her hand in a strong grip. "Then to-morrow at seven. Good-bye."

Sara watched him striding away—a well-built man of about forty, his hat rather rakishly set on his head.

He had dark hair and moustache, black eyes, bold and roving, a well-shaped nose, a little swollen with good living.

Some would have said a handsome fellow; others a rakish-looking, loudly-dressed sporting man, and the more fastidious a flashy-looking cad.

He looked back at Sara, and kissed his hand. The action made her feel quite sick, as she turned away.

To what depths must she descend! In what mud must she grovel before she gained her end! What lies she had invented and told. Her face blazed as she remembered them.

Well, she was not much more than a paid detective; and what awful fictions they invented, far worse than hers.

She had not harmed anyone. She attended Mrs. Paske, and read herself hoarse in her service.

She dressed Miss Pontifex's abundant red hair by the hour, standing till she was ready to sink with fatigue, until that vain, capricious young woman had seen the style that she thought suited her best.

She trimmed and untrimmed hats and bonnets. She mended, altered and darned. She rose early, and went to bed late.

She never "answered" when unjustly scolded. She was always punctual, ready and smiling, all because she was resolved to please, and determined to stay.

She had been six whole months in Mrs. Paske's service, as long as the boastful Anderson, and yet she had only gleaned one or two poor facts. The six months' labour and self-denial had been almost barren!

She knew that Mr. Paske came from Australia, from Port Augusta, near Adelaide; also Mr. Horne. That Mr. Paske had been in India, but not for long. That Mr. Horne lived in comfortable lodgings in Walmer, and went about to races; and that he was not a favourite with Mrs. Paske or Miss Pontifex. They thought him pushing and presuming, and never lost an opportunity of snubbing him; but Mr. Paske made it up to him.

This was what she had gleaned, after a six months' residence in the servants' hall. And this pushing, good-looking man, with his free-and-easy air, and bold black eyes, she was to seek and fascinate.

She shuddered at the prospect; but it was her best chance. There was nothing to be learned from Mr. Paske. He could be rough-tongued and fierce. He was not talkative, and he was suspicious. He kept

all his belongings locked up under patent locks.

She knew this, for in the dead of the night she had descended secretly, and tried them one by one.

He had kept his secret for twenty years, and, as far as she saw, might keep it twenty more; and she groaned in spirit, and clenched her hands.

Her project with respect to Mr. Horne was fraught with danger. The other women servants were not fond of her; whilst, on the other hand, William Hopkins was much and most embarrassingly too fond; and always wanting her to "keep company" with him; and, afraid of offending him, she always put him off with jokes and civil excuses.

Now, supposing she was seen taking walks with Mr. Horne in secret—meeting him on the sly, by the jealous eyes of William, or by the envious eyes of the house and laundrymaids—what would be the result?

The result would be that she would be immediately "packed off," as the saying is, at a moment's notice, with a month's wages in her pocket, and no character.

She must, therefore, be very sly, suspicious, and secret, or she would lose the substance whilst grasping at the shadow—the substance being her present situation—the shadow, the off-chance of her making some important discovery by means of talkative Mr. Horne!

CHAPTER XXVII.

SHE made up her mind at once—that she would not see him often, and that not about the place. She would take her "day-out," and meet him elsewhere. She would wear her smartest dress, her most becoming bonnet, her most bewitching smiles, and she would flatter him as she had flattered Richard Lamb. Oh, how she would flatter him! With this decision in her mind, she met him the following evening. How she disliked him, and his assured, swaggering jaunty air—his scent, his rings, his patent leather boots.

"Well, my dear, I have come to see you this time! I am not going up to the house. They have a big dinner party on—a lot of officers over from Dover—so I'd only be in the way. I can get as good a dinner elsewhere—and champagne too, without Mr. Paske's ugly face at the head of the table!"

"Mrs. Paske does not invite you often?"

"No. I don't want to be invited by the old scarecrow, nor to be thrown at the head of her carrot-headed daughter—or, rather, to have her thrown at my head," and be chuckled with overweening conceit.

"What do you mean—not Miss Pontifex?"

"And why not? Her stepfather would give his ears for it."

"Yes, but I don't think Miss Pontifex would look at you," she said, in a bantering voice.

"What?" he almost shouted.

"Of course," soothingly. "That's her bad taste; and she knows no better, poor thing."

"I can tell you what, that if I chose to hold up my finger, and show them, ahem—well, no matter what, I'd have the whole boiling, mother and daughters, crawling on the floor to lick my shoes."

Mr. Horne had dined, and his tongue was loosened; but Sara was cautious. No need to press him.

"You are too kind and too good-natured ever to bring them to that. One can see your amiability written in your face," said this artful person.

"By Jove! sometimes I think I am a soft fool when I think of things. I am a sleep-

ing partner in a firm—and I get precious little, I can tell you. Only that I won pretty well at Goodwood I should actually be hard up; and yet the head of the firm has thousands, and I've as good a right to them as he has, if all was known."

"It seems very hard. I am sure you are too generous, and allow yourself to be imposed upon."

"That's just it, and I am so soon jaded over," kicking a bit of stick out of his way.

"Well, now tell me something about Australia. Is it long since you left it?"

"Nine years."

"And are you ever going back?"

"I don't know. A certain person is always wanting me to go back, but I won't. I am not quite such a softy as to put ten thousand miles between me and my income."

"No, why should you. Where did you live? Please tell me about it. I am so ignorant about Australia, and I want to learn. Were you born there?"

"Yes, and so was Paske. We lived a stone's-throw from one another; but he was a grown-up man with whiskers when I was a mere lad."

"Of course! Why, he must be twenty years older than you are?"

"Well, not quite so much," immensely pleased. "My father was the doctor, and his was a chemist, and the two, of course, had a lot of dealings."

"Yes, and the sons have the same."

"We have had one big deal," laughing at his own wit, "that's all."

"And he came off best?"

"Yes. He is up to every dodge. It's like a race. My horse has got the pace, but he has got the best rider, who knows all the ropes, and always beats me on the post by a nose!"

"Why don't you have another deal?"

"By Jove! I will some of these days; and then I think I'll go back and see my own pals, and see the Melbourne Cup run for, and take a turn through the clubs in Collins-street, and have a rare old time."

"Melbourne is a fine city, is it not?"

"Splendid. But a bad place for youngsters to stop at, 'new chums' that come out from England, thinking to make their fortunes. There used to be a pack of rascals there that got hold of them and robbed and murdered them. Many a promising young chap has been reported missing and never heard of again, in spite of all the police could do."

"How horrible! And were these wretches never discovered?"

"Ay, once they were, after they had been carrying on this work for years and years. Would you like to hear it? If so, we will sit on this bench, and I'll light a cheroot. I'm considered rather a good hand at telling stories."

"I am sure you are. You must be very clever?"

"Ay, I've often thought of writing a book with my adventures. I can tell you, some of it would make your hair curl."

"What sort of adventures?"

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2000. Back Nos. can be obtained through any Newsagent.)

SUCCESS.

Success is but to do thy very best,
Leaving to God and circumstances the rest;
Not idle circumstances nor careless chance,
Nor fancies seen in iridescent dance,

But circumstance well used, by toil well shaded,
Its skeleton with wide-eyed wisdom draped,
Until symmetrical, filled out, complete,
It towers aloft a fortress and retreat.

Woman Against Woman.

By Effie Adelaide Rowlands,

Author of "Flower of Fate," "Unseen Fires," &c., &c.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Lord Greville and a party of friends are yachting and have put into Ostend for a few hours. His brother, Lord Dunstan, has strayed away from the rest of the party, and Lord Greville feeling anxious has gone in search of him. While strolling round a less frequented part of the town he is stopped by a woman who asks assistance which is readily given. On returning to his friends he finds that they have accidentally met Mrs. Archdale and her daughters, and it is at the earnest request of Lord Dunstan that they decide to remain another night at Ostend. Ione Archdale meets with an accident while on board the *Perl*, and which detained her for several days. Arriving in England Greville finds that Mrs. Archdale and her daughters have arranged to stay very close to his own Yorkshire seat. Mrs. Archdale plays her cards so adroitly that in the end Greville proposes to Ione, despite the protest of his friend Dick Fraser. Matters are now becoming interesting for Dick Fraser has met Mary, the lady Lord Greville befriended, and who is now on the high road to become a popular singer.

CHAPTER XVII.

ARE you sure you were not mistaken, my darling?" Esther asked, as she sat down on a stool before the fire, crouched up into a knot as usual, her brown eyes fixed on Mary's pale face resting back in the chair.

It was the late evening after that long and, to Greville, incomprehensible fainting fit. He had driven Mary home himself when she was well enough to move; and now she was back in the little room that had been, in deed and in truth, a home to her the last six months.

"You may have been mistaken, Mary, my sweet!" Esther said, eagerly. "There are so many dark men in London; they all look alike at a distance. You say there was not much light on the staircase. You may have been deceived. You are so nervous on this point. Remember you—"

Mary put her hand into Esther's loving one.

"I was not mistaken, dear," she said, wearily. Her brain seemed to be in a whirl. "I saw my husband, Paul, to-day. He is one and the same with M. Angelotti. Do you think I could forget his face, or his voice so soft and sweet? If I had not seen him, Esther, I should have known him immediately when I heard his voice."

Esther caressed the small hand gently, and Mary pushed herself into a sitting position.

"You see; I am not so strong as we both hoped, Esther," she said, unsteadily. "I have imagined myself fully prepared to meet Paul face to face any day without flinching. To-day has put me to the proof. See how I have succeeded. Fainting away in a strange house, like a weak silly child, and causing any amount of trouble and concern."

"Anybody might faint anywhere!" Esther said, quickly. "I am quite sure Lord Greville had no other thought save sincere distress in your illness."

"I received the greatest kindness," Mary said, timidly and evasively. She never meant to let Esther know how much she had suffered from Ione's strange manner when she had come to herself. "But all the same, I am vexed and grieved, Esther. It has shown me how poor and feeble a thing I am. It makes the future a difficult matter to face, my dear, my best friend."

Esther kissed the little hand tenderly, then put it down and rose to her feet.

"Now," she said, half seriously, half jokingly, "I am going to put on my most manlike air. You have often told me you think I have something of a man's determination and strength in my character. That being so, I am going to use a man's prerogative, and bully you right well."

"I am not afraid of your bullying," Mary said, with the faintest shadow of a smile.

"I know you treat me with a most fearful lack of respect," Esther retorted, glad to get the matter into a less serious groove. "But I must alter all that. Now be prepared to be lectured. First, however, let me ask you a question. You have, of course, determined in your own little mind that you will give up all thought of going to Barراكbourne next week, have you not?"

"I—I could not go, Esther," Mary faltered.

"You could and can," Esther said quietly, "What! You are going to sacrifice a pleasant friendship with a woman whom you revere and admire, and who is beginning to love you? Break off a career that is already more than successful? Banish yourself from the world, and bury your beauty and youth in some lonely country hole? Are you going to do all this, and for what? A cur, not a man—a creature who should be trodden in the mud beneath your feet. Come, my Mary, rouse your pride. You have suffered humiliation and misery at this man's hands once in your young life; let him not have the satisfaction of mastering you a second time. You are not the Mary he knew, a poor defenceless, penniless girl, with no one to whom you can turn for help! You are a beautiful woman—a woman whom the world delights to honour—a woman who will find friends ready and willing enough to champion her cause a hundred times, and protect her from a dozen such rats as this! Paul Cosanza, or Angelotti, whichever he calls himself, let him do his worst. You will defy him just the same!"

Mary's pale cheeks had a tinge of colour in them now. Esther's bold, strong, reliant words had fired the spark of her courage and pride. She was silent for a moment longer.

There was still a point that she shrank from—she who alone understood what degradation and pain it would mean.

"And if he recognises me, as of course he will, and—insists upon my returning to—Oh, Esther dear, that is beyond me!"

"Let him try!" Esther said, her lips closing firmly, and her eyes gleaming. "M. Angelotti will find it no easy matter to force a woman to return to him after such conduct as his. Do you remember what I once said to you, my darling? Either you are Paul Cosanza's wife, or you are not. He declared three years ago that you were not, and he has abandoned and deserted you since that time. Now he will find some difficulty in proving any claim to you; for, wife or no wife, the law will decide he has no further hold on a woman whom he has treated as he has treated you. You will be protected from any fear of molestation, believe me; for, if the worst comes to the worst, you shall put your case in Mr. Fraser's hands, and there will be an end of the matter!"

Esther's face flushed as she spoke this tribute to the power of the man she loved.

"I am your friend, Mary!" she went on, gently. "As your friend, I mean to see that your path is clear from all miserable mistakes and follies. You must go on, my dear one. You have put your hand to the plough. You must not turn back. The world is free and open to you as it is to Paul Cosanza. There is no shadow of sin or wrong on your pure soul. If anyone should fall back discomfited and dismayed, that

one is not you. We will see Miss Martingale to-morrow. I am sure her advice will coincide with mine!"

Mary rose and put her arms about the girl who had been to her father, mother, brother, sister, and friend mingled in one.

"I will not ask Miss Martingale," she said, softly. "Are you not the best and wisest counsellor in the world? Kiss me, Esther. You have done me good, as you always do. I will be strong. I will be proud, I will be firm. You shall see," with a wan, flickering smile, "how well I shall play my part in the future?"

Ione's half-determined dislike to the beautiful Mrs. Arbuthnot became an almost definite hatred. Jealousy was there in full—a vague, unreasoning jealousy, which the merest spark would turn into venom. She by no means shared Greville's interest and anxiety over Mary's condition. She was, indeed, extremely annoyed that anyone should have caused any excitement and sensation in her house but herself. She sneered to herself over Mary's faltered excuses.

"Overworked, not strong!" she repeated, "when the woman looks like a dairymaid! It is all tricks. I know the sort of designing person she is! Of course, Greville is taken in, and imagines she is going to die of consumption!"

Greville was indeed most grieved over Mary's sudden weakness. The interest and admiration he had always felt for her had deepened in the knowledge that had just come to him.

He recalled the misery in her voice, the despair and hopelessness that had clung about her that bygone night at Ostend; and, as he carried her slight figure into Ione's boudoir, he felt a thrill of tender pity shoot through his heart.

He waited on her, and gave her as much attention as though she had been a queen. Not for his wife could he have shown greater delicacy and thoughtfulness.

"She has overtaxed her strength nursing Otho. You see how fragile she is!" he said to Ione, who made no reply beyond shrugging her shoulders.

When Mary was recovered, and able to sit up, Greville went to order the carriage to be sent round, and in the few moments of his absence Lady Greville managed to convey to Mrs. Arbuthnot a very decided sense of her disapproval and annoyance at the events of the past hour.

She said "good-bye" in her coldest way. Greville noticed nothing strange; but Mary, with every nerve unstrung and quivering, was only too quick to read the hint.

She gave a heavy sigh of relief and misery as she drove away from the house; and Greville sat looking at her still white face, as she leaned back in a corner of the carriage, and felt a great longing well up in his warm, generous heart to be enabled to help this frail, lovely creature.

He was haunted by the remembrance of her face all the rest of the day. When he returned from driving her home he went to seek Ione.

She was shut in her room, lying down. She was tired, Susanne told him, so he had no chance of speaking about Mary until dinner-time.

As Otho was so much better Ione had a few guests to dinner—Dick Fraser and M. Angelotti among them.

Conversation had been fairly started. Ione was looking as startling and vividly beautiful as usual, but she was silent; to Dick it seemed as though she were sulky about something.

"So I have a rival this season!" Angelotti said, after awhile.

His voice was most musical. He spoke English fluently, but with a slight accent. He smiled for a moment as he spoke now.

" You have, indeed," a lady declared, on his left hand, " and Mrs. Arbuthnot is no ordinary rival ! "

" So I am told, madam," Angelotti said, with his graceful little bow.

" By Jove, yes ! " Greville exclaimed, hearing Mary's name. " You have, indeed, a rival at last, Paul ; and the funniest thing happened to-day. Your rival was here to-day when you were. You just missed seeing her by the most extraordinary chance in the world ! "

" Desole ! " Angelotti murmured, in his slow way. His handsome, melancholy eyes were fixed on Ione ; he admired her immensely, and he was interested in watching her face. " There is something wrong," he said to himself. " Is it anger or fatigue ? She must fatigue soon of *le cher* Greville. She is coquette au bout des ongles, while he—"

Ione looked across at him with her violet eyes, that could be so bold and hard at times.

" Mrs. Arbuthnot's disappointment exceeded yours, Monsieur," she said, with a little laugh that was scarcely genial. " She actually swooned away when you disappeared down the stairs without having seen her ! "

Dick started and bit his lip, while Angelotti raised his eyebrows, and smiled a faint smile.

" I am afraid I can hardly lay claim to so much honour, miladi," he said, snively. To himself he added, " So there is a jealousy already, and of the Arbuthnot. *Ma foi* ! there must be something in the woman to have made her mark so soon ! "

Greville hastened to explain.

" Mrs. Arbuthnot had been sitting with Otho—by the way, Paul, you must not forget to go and see the little chap after dinner. She insisted upon nursing him for a long time, and I fancy the heat of the room and the fatigue made her faint. Anyhow, she did faint, poor creature, and no mistake about it."

Dick sat silent, staring down at his plate in a fixed sort of way. This knowledge of Mary's weakness sent a horrible pain through his heart. He lifted his head at Ione's next remark.

" It was certainly a well-chosen moment, quite theatrical and dramatic. You will see, M. Angelotti, you must be prepared to be eclipsed for a short time by Mrs. Arbuthnot. The public like sensation for a little while, but art always triumph in the long run. Your triumph will be only the greater when we have tired of your imitator."

Dick's face flushed red for a moment, and then paled. Before Greville could speak he had spoken.

" That is a most ungenerous speech, Ione," he said, quietly, yet with anger thrilling every note of his voice.

Greville's sympathy was with him in the instant—a sympathy that was truly born, for he had felt, he scarcely knew why, a curious sort of discomfort in hearing such words of Mary come from anyone's lips, more especially his wife's.

Nevertheless, he ranged himself figuratively on Ione's side.

" Come ! come ! " he said, as cheerily as he could. " I won't have you two sparring at one another. Poor Mrs. Arbuthnot, I am sure, would be greatly distressed if she thought she were the subject of a discussion between intimate friends."

" How like a man ! " Ione cried, laughingly, and then she turned to Greville. " My dear, blind, stupid, old husband, you are n't absolutely the most innocent creature

in the world. Why, don't you know that all and any sort of publicity, whether of a pleasant character or not, is just the breath of their nostrils to women of Mrs. Arbuthnot's class and calibre ? "

There was a pause for a moment, and every eye was directed upon Dick Fraser, sitting back in his chair, with a somewhat Mephistophelian smile on his lips.

Angelotti caressed his short, dark moustache.

Greville had flushed crimson with mortification and pain. That it should have been his wife who spoke like this of an innocent, unoffending woman !—a woman who, for some strange reason, fate had thrown into his deepest sympathy and interest.

The memory of Mary's pure, exquisite face rose, as it were, like a reproach against this attack. He was silent only a moment, but as he would have spoken, Dick was before him.

" I am sure, Ione," Mr. Fraser said, gently, though coldly, " that you will not condemn Mrs. Arbuthnot so severely when I tell you she is a woman I respect and admire almost beyond description !—a woman who honours me in merely permitting me to call myself her friend ! "

" And friendship with you Fraser, is no empty word ! " Paul Angelotti broke in, quietly, softly. He spoke most easily, as though he saw nothing painful or disagreeable in the affairs of the moment. " Do you remember how you testified to your friendship for young Bellairs that night at Malta ? I shall never forget you and your clever fists ! Fists are such easy and wholesome weapons, better than the finest revolver or the rapier in the world ! "

The lady beside him, with quick tact, took up the conversation, and made some remark on the subject of duelling, which arrested general attention, and bridged over the difficulty caused by Ione's foolish conduct.

Laughter and chat continued until the end of dinner. Everyone seemed in the best of spirits, except the hostess.

Ione sat back in her chair, and positively sulked, replying in monosyllables to the remarks of her companions, biting her lip, and comforting herself with a lack of *savoir-faire* and dignity that made Greville wince, and Dick long to give her a hearty shaking.

There were those present at this dinner who would not fail to give a garbled account of what had occurred broadcast among society, and the story would not reflect much to Ione's credit. The world will forgive slander, malice, or even crime, but it (that is, the world of fashion) will never pardon bad manners.

Dick knew all this, and Greville knew it too, and he suffered accordingly.

" His punishment is following on his folly," Dick said to himself, sadly. He remembered how he had shrank from the thought of Ione reigning in his beloved aunt's place, and he knew he had not judged Greville's *fiancée* too harshly.

As for Paul Angelotti, the ordinary dull routine of an ordinary dinner party had been considerably enlivened by this small insight into Ione's nature.

He had, of course, admired Ione when he had met her on board the *Pearl* at Ostend, but he had had little opportunity of gauging her character ; and in the one visit he had paid to Barraclough in the autumn, he had immediately discovered the matrimonial manoeuvres in the air, and shrugged his shoulders with a smile, and had left the Castle quite prepared for the announcement of Greville's marriage with this pretty red-haired nobody.

Ione, as Ione Archdale, had been nothing but a pretty nobody in Angelotti's eyes ;

but Ione, Lady Greville Earne, was very different. Her startling beauty took proper effect on him ; her eccentricities of manner and bearing had a bizarre charm to him. Besides, it pleased him to know that she could not deceive him. She was as transparent in her vain, mean, jealous, paltry nature as the brook of running water. He had a sort of contemptuous pity for the man who had made this glittering sham of a woman his wife, the mother of his children.

Paul Angelotti was a cynic, in the deepest sense of the word. He scoffed at all things pure, holy, and sincere. To him women were toys made to be woed for a short amusement, not altars before whom the deepest and best part of a man's life and heart was to be laid.

" For a month or so," he said to himself, as he watched Ione's sullen face. " Carramba ! she would be a delight, but for a lifetime ! Greville, my dear friend, you have played a false move. You have had a very easy time of it up to now ! The future will show the reverse side of the picture, or I am not the man I am ! "

His eyes went from Ione to Dick Fraser, who was talking easily and fluently quite as usual, but Angelotti saw that the shadow brought by Ione's words still lay upon his face.

" Another fool ! " the Italian said to himself ; " all ready and willing at a moment's notice to pledge his honour for and stake his life on a woman's reputation. So Dick is in love with this new singer. *Ma foi* ! I confess I have at last a curiosity to behold my rival. Is my crown to be torn from me, and by a woman ! " His smile vanished for a moment, and then came back. " Do I not know my world ? A new toy for a season—only a few short weeks. My dear Mrs. Arbuthnot, make your harvest while you may ! To win a success is something I own, but to keep it, *ma cher* ! I do not fear you. This time next year you will be forgotten, while I shall remain. *Nous verrons* ! "

It was merely an armed truce between Dick and his cousin's wife after that evening Ione had had her first quarrel with Greville on the subject—a short, but a bitter experience to the man who held himself as her slave.

Ione demanded an immediate action on Greville's part. Dick Fraser must be forbidden the house. It was the least Greville could do ! Had he not grossly insulted her under her own roof ? Was her husband going to permit any man, even his own cousin, to address her as Dick had done ?

Greville had listened to the tirade in silence. Ione had stormed about the room, crying with the excitement and hot passion of her anger, flinging herself first into one chair, then into another, talking vehemently, sneering, and losing all command of herself.

Greville had never moved from his position, that of standing beside the fire. Ione's display of temper jarred on him beyond description. There was something in her utter self-forgetfulness and lack of dignity that seemed to put the finishing touch to the pain and disapproval he had felt at dinner the preceding night.

This was no simple child, with a child's petulance and vexation. This was a stormy, passionate woman, who gave evidence, in her unseemly wrath, of a nature the very thought of which as being possessed by his wife gave Greville a cold chill at his heart.

When Ione had exhausted all her incitements upon Dick's luckless head, Greville broke his silence.

" I am sorry, Ione," he said, and for the life of him he could not take the coldness out of his voice. " I am sorry you have

spoken like this. You know it is grief to me to have to thwart you in the very smallest way, but"—Greville drew his breath almost like a sigh—"sometimes one is forced to do disagreeable things, my dear little wife. You ask me what is impossible. Dick is not only my cousin; he is my friend. A man I honour, respect, and esteem. As such he must ever be welcome to my house, wherever I may be!"

"You put your cousin before your wife, then?" Ione said, sullenly, yet with a sharp, little laugh.

"You know that would be impossible," Greville replied, with gentle dignity.

"I am afraid I can't agree with you," Ione retorted, laughing again, in the short, sneering way that jarred on Greville's every nerve. "Most men I think would have resented such an insult being put upon their wives as Mr. Fraser put upon me to-night; that is, providing of course that they cared for their wives in the very least. Yet you—"

Ione did not continue; she jerked her shoulders suddenly, and swung herself to and fro in her chair.

Greville looked at her in sorrow and amazement.

"My dear one," he said, a little unsteadily when he spoke. "This is not like you. This is not my pearl, my little wife, who says such hard and cruel things! Surely, Ione, you could not even imagine that I do not care for you, and for your dignity? You will never find me wanting to uphold you, my darling, in every sense of the word. But to-night—"

"But to-night," Ione broke in, "you refuse to do what is your simple duty!"

"Yes, Ione," Greville said, in a low voice. "I have tried to shirk my duty. I have tried to spare myself the pain of hurt-

ing you in the smallest way. My duty is not to quarrel with Dick. It is to tell you plainly and frankly, my dearest, my love," coming across to her and holding out his hands, "that it was not Dick who was wrong to-night. It was you!"

As long as she lived Ione never forgave her husband those words. They stung her vanity to the quick. They were mortifying in many senses. Her mother's shrewdness was proved in them—her own inferior quality clearly shown, and worse than this in her eyes. Her power over Greville was here demonstrated as being far less than she had imagined.

From her earliest childhood Ione had been bored, by and sneered at all goody-goody sentiments, to use her own name. Greville's extraordinary honesty and frank, straightforwardness assumed annoying proportions in her eyes and raised up all sorts of difficulties in the future.

"I believe he is nothing but a prig," she said, to herself when she was alone and the quarrel had been ended gently. She laughed softly to herself. "Well, when I am tired of you, Greville, I shall know how to make you suffer, and if you go on much more as you did to-night it will not be long before I am tired—very tired," Ione said emphatically.

She was too angry or excited for sleep, so she sat with one of her favourite French novels before her fire, and tried to read. As she sat there, her eyes on her book, her mind recalled as in a vision the events of the day. Mary's visit, her illness, Greville's interest, her own jealousy and annoyance. Then the dinners, with Angelotti's dark eyes gazing into her's spurring her on as it were to attack one whom she knew already she hated.

The colour rose to her face as Dick's quiet, grave reproof came to her mind, and she closed her lips in a thin ugly line. If Dick was to go unpunished, it would be strange if Ione could not find some way of revenging herself on the cause of her discomfiture; and in the world of fashion Mrs. Arbutnott, a woman singing to earn her bread, would not be able to fight and conquer so clever and powerful an enemy as Lady Greville Earne.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE journey down to Barrackbourne, the fresh country air, the joy of seeing his dear "grannie" again, seemed to put new life into little Otho, and, therefore, the house party, which had been almost abandoned for the moment, was reconstructed, and the Castle was all alive with expectancy.

Lady Barrackbourne tried to welcome Ione with sincere and affectionate warmth, but, somehow, she felt that the meeting between her son's wife and herself lacked the ring of genuine pleasure, and on Ione's side at least, was full of artificial effusiveness. The Countess could not rid her mind o' a feeling that Ione had been partly to blame for Otho's illness. At any rate, she was grieved and vexed beyond measure that the boy should have been deprived of his nurse by Ione's orders; but no words were spoken between them, and to all outward appearance there was perfect harmony of thought and feeling between Greville Earne's mother and wife.

The house party was composed of some of the smartest of the smart world, and the great excitement was the forthcoming entertainment in honour of Lady Barrackbourne's birthday. Ione had sug-

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C U T T H I S O U T

C U T T H I S O U T

gested theatricals, and Greville had seconded it with an idea—why should they not have an operatic instead of a dramatic performance?

It could scarcely be called an amateur one, when Paul Angelotti and Mrs. Arbuthnot were to take part in it; but apart from these two splendid artists the company would be gathered from among the guests.

Angelotti arrived on the same day as the Earnes, and was received cordially by Lady Barrackbourne and gushed over by most of the women present.

He was so handsome, so strangely mysterious in manner—no one quite understood Paul Angelotti. His dark face with its large melancholy eyes, had made many a woman's heart beat quickly beneath her jewels and laces. His quietness, his soft, low voice, his reticence, and his habit of living, entirely in his own life, gave him a stronger interest and deeper flow of sympathy than falls to the lot of most men. There were one or two among the women, maids, and matrons whom he had conquered in his three years' triumph, who could have given the world the lie direct when it spoke with eloquent praise on Angelotti's devout life, on his pureness of spirit, his lovely hermit-like existence; but the power that had brought these frail, foolish ones into his spell laid a seal upon their lips, and Angelotti was never known save as the world saw him.

With Lady Barrackbourne he was a favourite because of his devoted friendship for Greville. With Greville he was a favourite because of his music, and his apparently grave, solitary existence.

"I envy you, Paul!" Greville said, sometimes. "You can live in the world and yet beyond it. What is your secret?"

"Philosophy," Angelotti would answer, with his faint, inscrutable smile, and the smile would deepen for a moment when Greville had left him. "To compare himself with me!" he would think, with a sort of sublime contempt. "Poor, simple fool!"

Ione threw herself eagerly into the forthcoming theatricals. She cast herself for an important part, and informed M. Angelotti he must coach her in the singing of her role.

She knew that by monopolising him in this way she would make most of the other women jealous; and, moreover, she did not intend to make a failure if possible.

It was a bold experiment to sing against such an artist as Mary Arbuthnot; but Ione was not nervous, and with the courage of ignorance determined on her action.

Mary was to join them four days before the performance. She had received the music of her part in town, and was to arrive perfect. All but for rehearsals Ione had a week before her.

"You must make me sing like an angel!" she said, imperiously, to Angelotti.

"That which already exists cannot be made again," he answered, and the while he winced almost perceptibly, as Ione sang out boldly in her clear, strong, unmusical voice.

They were closeted together for hours practising and rehearsing.

"Are you not jealous of M. Angelotti?" one of the guests suggested to Greville, with some spite, for she did not like Ione.

"Jealous of Paul!" Greville laughed. "No—that could never be—never!"

"Why not?" was the next question.

"Well, I don't know exactly," Greville answered, wrinkling his brow; "only, somehow, it does seem possible. Dear old Paul! The most harmless person in the world, Lady Agnes. I could not be jealous of him if I tried; besides," Greville added, with a touch of seriousness in his voice,

"I am never jealous of my little wife. I trust her fully, blindly, implicitly."

The lady, left to herself, shrugged her shoulders, and gave a little laugh.

"Poor Greville!" she said, and then she turned with a start. "Why, M. Angelotti, you here! I thought you were with Lady Greville in the music room? A moment sooner, and you would have heard yourself discussed!"

"By Lady Agnes?" Paul said, with a smile, "quel honneur! And what was said? Something nice, I hope?"

Lady Agnes Grey laughed.

"Oh! very nice. Lord Greville was declaring you the most harmless man in the world—one incapable of rousing anyone's jealousy. It is a good character, M. Angelotti!"

"And suits me," Angelotti smiled. "Greville, you see, knows me thoroughly."

His dark eyes met the handsome, though cynical ones opposite to him. There was an instant's pause; then both smiled, as it were, involuntarily, and Lady Agnes changed the conversation.

The day of Mrs. Arbuthnot's arrival came at last. Ione was not very amiable on this occasion. Clever and unscrupulous as she was, she was yet lacking in the perfection of worldly wisdom.

For instance, it was as clear as the sun at noon tide to Angelotti that his beautiful pupil was working herself into a bad temper for no other reason than that she disliked Mrs. Arbuthnot, and was jealous of her.

"So my rival comes to-day," he said to her as they went to the music-room.

"Your rival!" Ione said, scornfully. "The mere idea of Mrs. Arbuthnot being your rival is absolutely absurd."

Paul smiled, and looked up into the large violet eyes beside him.

He had seen quickly that Ione was piqued and angry at his apparent lack of admiration for her—she, who was accustomed to have every man at her feet as soon as they saw her.

It pleased him to vex her. It pleased him to think that he had the power to touch this pretty mass of selfishness in her most vital part.

Ione, had of course, been fully prepared for a complete subjugation of Angelotti.

For that she had worn her newest and most eccentric gowns, posed in a hundred different ways, and graciously bestowed on him the utmost exclusive honour of her presence.

Paul was amused by her, but not deceived.

No matter how soft her violet eyes could look he knew that the small organ called a heart was lacking altogether in Ione's shapely, graceful person, and he felt a contemptuous thrill of pity for the man who had built the happiness of his future life round about this cold, selfish, petty-natured woman.

Dean Farrar on Marriage

A charming article on this subject forms a delightful introduction to a handbook, entitled "Marriage, Weddings, and the Home," which is absolutely invaluable to all who are contemplating matrimony. This book will prove a very acceptable present to all engaged couples. A Purchaser at Nottingham says: "From a very cursory inspection I should imagine it to be a most useful book." It explains every point in regard to etiquette, offers suggestions as to where to spend the honeymoon, there is a chapter in regard to furnishing, etc., and the 1/6 which it costs is a marvelously good investment. Send Stamps or Postal Order to-day to F. W. SEARS, 7, OAKBROOK CHAMBERS, LUDGATE HILL, LONDON.

Despite the absence of the heart, however, Paul knew he could exercise what power he liked over Ione, and he told himself languidly that he would begin that amusement when the mood seized him.

It pleased him to be so inclined this day.

"Such words from your lips make me the proudest man in the world," he said.

Ione looked down at him, and her pulses quickened.

So he, too, could not withstand her fascinations.

"Did I say anything nice?" she asked languidly. "I don't feel as if I could even think a nice thought to-day, I am so cross."

Paul took her hand, covered with jewels, and carried it to his lips.

"Let me soothe you," he said, softly, and he began to sing.

Ione stood with her hand on his shoulder. She would far rather have listened to words of admiration for herself than all the songs in the world, and Paul knew this right well, and chose to vex her anew.

The afternoon wore away, passed in this half-veiled flirtation, but not advancing Paul's subjugation very much; and when they left the music-room and went to join the others in the large, quaint old room, Ione's temper was certainly not improved.

Otho was running too and fro—a delicate, fair-haired little creature, in a black velvet suit.

"Mrs. Arbuthnot has one keen admirer," Lady Agnes said to Ione. "That child has worked himself into a state of excitement over her arrival."

Ione felt a longing to take Otho in her strong, lithe hands, and fling him away from her altogether.

Her hatred for the boy was grown stronger of late.

Whenever she heard of the death of a child of his age she would pause and say to herself,—

"Why is it not Otho? Why does he not die? It is only wishing him to suffer to wish him to live a poor, weak, sickly creature like that."

Angelotti caught the small earl in his arms.

"Who is coming? What is all this?" he asked.

Otho wriggled from his hold.

"Mrs. Arbuthnot! Mrs. Arbuthnot!" he cried, and flying across the hall he precipitated himself upon a slight woman's figure that had come that moment through the doorway, escorted by Dunstan and Greville.

Ione sneered as she saw Mary kneel down and put her arms about the child.

"Always posing for theatrical effect," she said in Angelotti's ear.

He smiled. He was unconsciously interested in this woman who had just come. His rival! It was a strange word. It amused him. He drew back to the great tall fireplace, whilst all those who knew Mrs. Arbuthnot pressed forward to greet her.

"My mother is in her room, eagerly expecting you, but you must have some tea first," Greville said.

Angelotti frowned slightly as he heard the answer.

"Oh, no! please let us go to Lady Barrackbourne at once," Mary said.

The Italian looked across at the speaker; her back was turned to him.

"A beautiful voice!" he said to himself.

"If she sings as she speaks, the world has shown wisdom for once!"

Greville was leading the way to his mother's room when he looked backwards.

"Ah!" he said, with a smile. "This must be delayed no longer. Mrs. Arbuthnot, will you stop just one instant? I have someone here whom you must graciously receive. One—who—Paul, come forward! Mrs. Arbuthnot, may I present my friend, and I trust in the future, your friend also, M. Paul Angelotti."

Mary paused a moment, then advanced and held out her hand.

"I am pleased to know you at last, Monsieur Angelotti," she said, quietly; looking straight into the dark eyes that were fixed on her beautiful face, with an expression that was almost one of agony and fear combined. "It is a pleasure too long deferred."

Paul Angelotti stood transfixed for the moment, then he seemed to arouse himself with an effort; he stepped forward, and put his hand into the small one outstretched. It was cold as ice.

"The pleasure, as you say, Mrs. Arbuthnot, has been too long deferred," he said, in a voice from which the music was all gone; and as Mary, with grave composure, bowed and turned away with Greville, Paul drew a deep breath that was almost like a sob of pain.

"So," he said to himself with a queer expression round his mouth. "So we meet again, do we, my Mary, and like this! And you are going to fight me, are you? Not wise, Mary, not wise! You have known me once. You should not try to come to war with me. I am too strong for you, as you will see!"

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2001. Back Nos. can be obtained through any newsagent.)

Facetiae.

A WORD TO THE FATHERS.—If there were fewer fat-tailed calves there would be fewer prodigal sons.

THE ballet girl cannot be charged with affectation; she puts on less than anyone else in the company.

SHE: "Mrs. La Salle is always changing husbands." HE: "Yes; she told me she was wedded to married life."

DAISY: "I have made up my mind to enter society." HARDHEAD: "What has your mind got to do with it?"

HE: "She is going to marry a reporter, is she not?" SHE: "Yes, to reform him." HE: "What will he do for a living?"

"I SUPPOSE the volunteers are glad to be coming home from South Africa," said Mildred. "Well, I should say!" replied her brother. "They are coming in transports."

WIFE: "I understand that the man they rescued from the burning building tried to commit suicide." HUSBAND: "No wonder. He had on a pair of pajamas his wife had made for him."

HER OPINION.—HE (watching another couple): "He is—er—somewhat older than she. Is he wealthy?" SHE: "Very likely. I presume she didn't marry him just on account of his age."

MAN PROPOSES.—MR. SHORTPURSE: "What are we paying that woman for washing?" MRS. S.: "Five shillings a week." "Hum! I can get a washing-machine for two pounds, and I'll do it." MR. SHORTPURSE: (month later) "How does that washing-machine work?" MRS. S.: "Very nicely, but it's rather expensive." "Expensive? How?" "The woman makes me hire a boy to help to run it."

WHERE DARWINISM FAILS.—FIRST DOG: "My master is a great scientist. I wonder if he has found out where we came from." SECOND DOG (glancing at a sausage factory): "Guess not. There's too many missing links."

AN UNPOETIC BRIDE.—POETIC BRIDEGROOM: "I could sit here for ever, gazing into your eyes and listening to the wash of the ocean." PRACTICAL BRIDE: "Oh, that reminds me, darling; we have not paid our laundry bill yet."

NOT MISFITS.—MRS. CRIMSONBEAK: "It seems strange to me, if matches are made in heaven, that there should be so many unhappy marriages." MR. CRIMSONBEAK: "Oh, you forget; it is the matches that are made there—not the misfits."

WOMANLIKE.—ONE EVENING ADAM WAS MAKING LOVE TO EVE, BUT SHE SEEMED DISSATISFIED. "WHAT IS THE MATTER, MY DARLING?" HE ASKED. "OH, ADDIE, DEAR, SHE SIGHED, 'IF I COULD BUT CONVINCE MYSELF THAT I AM THE ONLY WOMAN YOU EVER LOVED!'"

A DEFECT IN DOLLS.—"MAMMA, I DON'T THINK THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE DOLLS ARE VERY PIUS PEOPLE," SAID A LITTLE GIRL TO HER MOTHER ONE DAY. "WHY NOT, MY CHILD?" "BECAUSE YOU CAN NEVER MAKE THEM KNEEL. I HAVE ALWAYS TO LAY MY DOLL DOWN ON HER STOMACH TO SAY HER PRAYERS."

THE SINECURE.—"WELL, MY BOY, AND WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?" "WELL, DAD, I DON'T KNOW. WHAT I WANT IS ONE OF THESE FAUCY JOBS WHERE YOU DO THE LEAST POSSIBLE WORK FOR THE VERY LARGEST POSSIBLE FEE." "GUESS YOU ARE CUT OUT FOR A CORPORATION LAWYER, MY BOY." "NO, DAD, I WAS THINKING OF BEING A MEDICAL SPECIALIST."

WHAT HE HAD OVERLOOKED.—"I HAVE A MOST UNCOMFORTABLE FEELING," SAID THE ICE MAN. "IT SEEMS TO ME AS IF I HAD OVERLOOKED SOMETHING TO-DAY." "IT ISN'T POSSIBLE THAT YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN TO RAISE THE PRICE, IS IT?" ASKED HIS WIFE. "BY GEORGE! THAT'S JUST WHAT IT IS!" HE EXCLAIMED. "I KNEW I HAD NEGLECTED ONE OF MY DAILY DUTIES."

WANTED, NO EXTREMES.—EMPLOYMENT AGENT: "WHAT WAS THE MATTER WITH YOUR LAST PLACE?" DOMESTIC: "THE COUPLE HAD ONLY BEEN MARRIED A MONTH, AN' I CUDN'T STAND THE LOVE-MAKIN'." AGENT: "WELL, HERE'S A CHANCE IN A HOUSE WHERE THE COUPLE HAVE BEEN MARRIED TEN YEARS." DOMESTIC: "THAT'S TOO LONG. I LIKES PEACE AN' QUIET."

PROGRESSIVE PIETY.—OLD FASHIONED PASTOR: "YOU OBSERVE NO FALLING OFF IN SPIRITUALITY IN YOUR CONGREGATION, I HOPE?" POPULAR YOUNG CLERGYMAN: "I THINK OUR CONGREGATION HAS NEVER BEEN AS ACTIVE IN CHURCH WORK AS NOW. THE LADIES' ICE CREAM SOCIALS ARE EXCELLENTLY ATTENDED, AND OUR LAST RUMMAGE SALE REALIZED NEARLY £70 FOR THE ORGAN FUND."

NOT A SUCCESS.—"I WARN YOU," HE SAID, THREATENINGLY, "TO KEEP AWAY FROM MISS BILTON. I HAVE BEEN MAKING LOVE TO HER MYSELF." "HAVE YOU REALLY?" REPLIED HIS RIVAL. "WELL, SHE'LL BE GLAD TO HAVE THE MATTER CLEARED UP." "CLEARED UP! WHAT DO YOU MEAN?" "WHY, SHE SAID SHE THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT YOU'D BEEN TRYING TO DO, BUT SHE WASN'T SURE."

HE DIDN'T COMPLAIN.—YOUNG WIFE: "THIS TALK ABOUT MEN BEING SO IMPATIENT WHEN A WOMAN IS GETTING READY TO GO ANYWHERE IS ALL NONSENSE." FRIEND: "DOESN'T YOUR HUSBAND COMPLAIN AT ALL?" YOUNG WIFE: "NO, indeed. Why, last evening I couldn't find my gloves, and had a long hunt for half a dozen other things; and yet, when I was finally dressed, and went down-stairs to my husband, there he was by the fire, reading and smoking as calmly as if I wasn't half an hour late." FRIEND: "WELL, I DECLARE! WHERE WERE YOU GOING?" YOUNG WIFE: "TO PRAYER MEETING."

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Gleanings

To be thoroughly hated one needs but to be reasonable.

He that is successful can afford to smile ; he that is not successful cannot afford to do otherwise.

If many of us could see ourselves as we really are, we should be ashamed to be on speaking terms with ourselves.

A GERMAN scientist, sweltering in Berlin on a very warm day, hopefully looked forward to the time when the sun's heat will be much less than it is at present. This desideratum is announced to occur in about ten millions of years.

CAN a man live without his stomach ? This question has been decided affirmatively by Karl Kruger, a Chicago gardener. Four months ago, because of cancer, his stomach was removed by an expert surgeon. Then he weighed 96 pounds ; now he weighs 160, and is still taking on flesh.

CHARLES BELL believed that he could take poison without serious effect. He swallowed twenty-five grains of morphine, and in a little while he vomited it. This demonstration so pleased him that he thought even a pistol shot would not seriously harm him. Aiming a revolver at his temple, he fired. That was Mr. Bell's last mistake in this life.

The late Mrs. Kruger always made her own dresses, and when Mr. Kruger asked her hand in marriage, she said : "I can sew, I can cook, I can bake bread, I can scour, and I can sweep." Her coffee was world-famous, and Oom Paul always averred she could make more coffee from a given number of beans than any other woman in the world.

BARBER AND MAGISTRATE.—Within less than a dozen miles of the City Hall, in the borough of Manhattan, a quiet suburban community has a justice of the peace who continues to practice his calling as a barber, and holds court in a room adjoining his shop. From chair to chair he flits, in one moment plying his razor or scissors and chattering like a true Figaro, in another announcing his judicial decisions with the solemnity of a Lord High Chancellor. The barber-magistrate, shaving-soap in one hand and the scales of justice in the other, is a truly imposing figure.

MCLAREN'S cricket team is proceeding to Australia under vastly different conditions from those that confronted the pioneer "All England Eleven" of forty years ago. The voyage now takes less than half the time ; the steamers have become floating palaces ; the cricketing centres in the Colonies are all connected by railway ; and the bone-shaking long rides up country in mail coaches only linger in the memories of the few septuagenarian surviving cricketers who experienced their terrors. The remuneration to the professionals of the first team that visited Australia was only £150 per man ; now it is £300.

A YOUNG Danish journalist, Mr. Marius B. Schröder, is on a journey round the world in performance of a wager on the question whether a man, being penniless, can go round the world in a year. Mr. Schröder, who is a bachelor of twenty-seven, started on August 28 from Copenhagen. The wager is for £555. If successful he will receive £250 of that amount, while £250 will go to the funds of the Danish Journalists' Institution, and £55 to the Sailors' Widows Fund of Copenhagen, and the Copenhagen Poor-box. In addition to his passport, the traveller carries a sheaf of letters of recommendation from Danish Consuls, newspaper editors, and heads of public departments.

THE mystery of the Argyllshire woman hermit is cleared up. It is not romantic. "Miss Macdougall" was a nurse-housemaid, and afterwards a laundry worker, but becoming seriously ill with rheumatism, she had to give up the work. Unwilling to take assistance from relatives, she left Glasgow and walked all the way to Ardnamy, near Easdale—a walk of four weeks. Not having money to pay for lodgings she decided to live on the shore near Ardnamy Castle, and she is still there, an object of curiosity to the Highlanders. She spends most of her time sitting on a stone knitting stockings, although she goes herself bare-legged and bare-footed.

MARRIAGE AS CONDUCTED IN GERMANY.—One seldom hears of elopements in Germany. It is impossible for young people to marry in that country without the consent of their parents or legal guardians. Certain prescribed forms must be gone through or the marriage is null and void. When a girl has arrived at what is considered a marriageable age, her parents make a point of inviting young men to the house, and usually two or three are invited at the same time, so that the attention may not seem too pointed. No young man however, is invited to the house until after he has called at least once and thus signified his wish to have social intercourse with the family. In Germany, a man must be at least eighteen years old before he can make a proposal, but when it is made and accepted the proposal is speedily followed by the betrothal. This generally takes place privately, shortly after which the father of the bride—as she is then called—gives a dinner or supper to the most intimate friends of both families, when the fact is formally announced and shortly after becomes a matter of public knowledge.

AN EARTHQUAKE THAT DID NOT TAKE PLACE.—The most celebrated year for earthquakes in English history was that of 1750. On February 8, and in the next month two sharp shocks were felt in London, and a mad lifeguardsman prophesied that there was to be another on April 5. On the day before there was a general exodus from London. Quacks sold pills as "sovrn against earthquake," and "earthquake gowns" were sold of war material for those who intended to camp out. Thousands of people, including many peers and persons of importance, camped in Hyde-park and Walpole tells us how Lord Gulway and three ladies went to an inn ten miles out of town, and played brag till four in the morning. The earthquake never took place, but the lifeguardsman was put in a madhouse.

EVERY wild animal's life is an everyday fight against violent death at the hands of some enemy. By day hawks sail overhead, and nothing seems to escape their wonderful eyes. By night owls fly with soft, muffled wings, and velvet-footed animals prowl everywhere. So it is merely a question of how long any animal or bird can delay the inevitable tragic end which must come to them. To realize how many small animals prowl through the woods by night, simply follow the bank of some small stream, where there are soft muddy places ; there you will find the tell-tale tracks in great numbers. These tracks tell how well the whole surrounding country has been hunted for quarry of all sorts. When an animal becomes sick, or old, or infirm, it soon falls a prey to some of its enemies. It rarely dies a natural death when in the woods ; for day and night its enemies are constantly about. What a wild animal's feelings must be, man cannot realize, for he has got too far from his original savage state.

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VESTA.—The gentleman was clearly in the wrong. The lady having just declined the first application on the plea that she wished to remain quiet, it was most ungallant for him ever to wish, and still more so for him to insist, upon her falsifying her word.

L. MARTHA.—Oscar Wilde was a man of uncommon ability, but of immoral habits. He was the son of Sir William Robert Wallis Wilde, a surgeon, and of Jane Francesca Lady Wilde, a woman of letters. He was born in Dublin in 1854, and studied at Trinity College, where he obtained the Berkeley gold medal for Greek, and he took the Newdigate prize for English literature at Oxford in 1874, graduated in 1877, and went to London in 1887, where he wrote several plays, and became the apostle of the aesthetic movement, of which the sunflower was the emblem. He lectured on art subjects in the United States in 1882, and later in England and Paris. In 1895 he was condemned to penal servitude for infamous conduct. After his release, in 1897, he went to Paris, where he suffered many hardships, drinking heavily, of absinthe mostly, until his death in Paris, November 30, 1900.

THIRTY YEARS' READER.—I am afraid nothing I can recommend will give you back your hair, and so many persons suffer in the same way. The following will be found an excellent remedy to prevent the hair falling, and if you look to your general health as well, I feel certain you will derive much benefit from its use:—The lotion is made by simply mixing the following ingredients well together: 8 drachms of tincture of gaborandi, 1½ drachms of vinegar of cantharides, 2 ounces lavender water, 4 drachms glycerine, and orange flower water to make 8 ounces. Shake before using, and sponge into the roots twice daily.

DICK.—The female pigeon lays two eggs several times a-year. They pair for life, though they assemble in flocks. They have no song, short legs with no distinct membrane between the toes, tail with twelve feathers, and they walk well, fly with great speed, and keep on the wing for a long time. The most remarkable species is undoubtedly the carrier, or messenger.

XENIA.—Marriage licenses may be obtained in the country at the office of the bishops' registrars, but licenses so obtained only permit the parties to be married in the diocese in which they are issued. If you want a license available in any part of England and Wales it can only be obtained from the Faculty Office, Doctor's Commons, London. Affidavits are prepared from the personal instructions of one of the parties about to be married, and the license is delivered to the party upon payment of the fees, which vary from £2 2s. 6d. to £2 12s. 6d. One of the parties must have resided for the fifteen days immediately preceding the issue of the license in the parish in which the ceremony is to be performed.

P. BANKS.—Perhaps the most valuable frame ever made for a picture is that which encloses "The Virgin and Child" in the Cathedral of Milan. Its size is 8 feet by 6 feet, and it is of massive hammered gold, with an inner molding of lapis lazuli. The corners have hearts designed in large pearls, and precious stones are inlaid around it. It is said to have been the gift of a rich nunney, and its estimated value is £35,000. One of the pictures in the Vatican at Rome is enclosed in a frame studded with jewels, so that the value of the frame nearly equals that of the picture. Many of the churches on the continent of Europe have pictures with similarly ornamented frames of great value.

T. P. DOWNEY.—It is not true that a cannon discharged over the water in which a person has been drowned will invariably result in bringing the body to the surface. Numerous instances are known where the experiment has utterly failed. The body of a drowned person, after lying in the water for some time, becomes filled with gases formed by decomposition, and these eventually render it so much lighter than the water that, following natural rules, it arises to the surface.

Mrs. G. Kettering.—I entirely reciprocate your kind wishes. This war is a terrible business for us all, and more so for those who have anyone near and dear to them at the front, and I sincerely trust that your son will soon return safe and sound. I am glad to know that you sent him "George Simpson's Luck." If it reaches him safely I am sure it will give him pleasure and remind him of the many happy hours he spent while in England reading his favourite LONDON READER, and I have no doubt his comrades will enjoy reading it with him. "Without a Reference" is a very fine story and you will find that the interest is sustained right to the very end.

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